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Research, Analyses & Writing

Sabina Ymeri Albert Rakipi

Data Processing

Elda Dakli

Editor

Blendi Kajsiu

Data Entry

Dorina Mucollari

Fejzi Braushi

Translation

Sabina Ymeri, Jorgji Qirjako, EldaDakli

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ALBANIAN INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Rr "Deshmoret e 4 Shkurtit", Nr. 7/1. Tirana, Albania

Tel: +355 42 488 53 Fax +355 4 270 337

E-mail aiis@icc.al.eu.org E-mail aiis@albaniaonline.net

Website : <http://www.aiis-albania.org>

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INTRODUCTION

In October 2004 the Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS) surveyed for the second time the Public Administration, the business community, NGOs and Media, in order to assess their level of knowledge on the European Union, and the understanding these groups have on the European integration process. The first survey was realized in October 2002 and revealed that knowledge on the European Union and its institutions was limited. The survey also showed a series of serious misunderstandings regarding the process of Albania's EU integration in terms of its timeframe, determining factors, and the benefits that Albania would derive from it.¹ These findings were quite disturbing in view of the fact that the survey focused on four categories that are supposed to be well informed, not only due to their level of education (generally higher education), but also since some of these categories are either directly affected by (business community) or directly responsible for (public administration) the reforms to be implemented in the framework of the country's preparation for EU membership, and because they may influence the knowledge and perceptions of the society at large (Media and NGOs).

The same categories were chosen with the same questionnaire and surveying techniques in order to explore and compare the dynamic of change on the level of knowledge and perceptions on the integration process.² It is important to point out that this new research is carried out almost two years following the official opening of the negotiations for the Stabilization Association Agreement³. During this time EU and Albania's integrations process has been under the spotlight, from political parties to the media. Furthermore, two other important events have drawn attention on this process: the Thessalonica Summit, which for the first time offered to Western Balkans countries a more tangible European perspective; and the EU enlargement with ten new members on May 1st, 2004. This historical event, as well as the prospects for the imminent accession of Bulgaria and Romania, lately Croatia as well, means that in the near future Western Balkans will be surrounded by EU members. This in turn raises their hopes and expectations to join EU.

The new level of relations between Albania and EU – negotiations for the SAA, as well as the recent EU enlargement – requires a consistent measurement of the knowledge on, understanding of, as well as expectations related to the EU integration. The integration process has become the most important item in the political and social agenda of Albanian society. For the first time the business community is trying to have an impact over the process of reforms to be introduced in the integration context, while the media is covering the topic at greater length. In addition, the dialogue between EU structures and Albania's has intensified.

¹ See Albania and the European Union: Perceptions and Realities, Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS, Tirana 2002) on www.aiis-albania.org.

² With a few partial changes, which do not affect the essence of the questionnaire and its comparability. Some questions were added relating to perceptions on relations with neighbors in the context of regional integration and the signing of FTAs, as well as questions relating to the negotiations for the SAA and its benefits.

³ On 31 January 2003.

However, despite the great interest and the unanimous agreement on EU integration as the ultimate objective, decision-makers do not demonstrate the necessary will for the actual implementation of integration reforms. Short-term considerations have triumphed over long-term vital interest for the country's development. This is why we think it important to present to local actors and EU institutions the understanding of some key social groups in Albania on the integration process. In this context, aside from a picture of perceptions and expectations of the society, this report presents a set of recommendations that we hope will prove helpful for local and international actors.

In the future we plan to measure perceptions and the understanding of the EU integration process on a more frequent basis, in a periodical fashion that will extend to more categories, such as the local government, political parties, academia, and farmers. In the long term the Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS) aims to establish a strategic analysis unit for the study of perception trends, as well as general issues pertinent to the European Integration process.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Support for Albania's EU membership remains high in all four surveyed categories, although there is a significant increase in the percentage of respondents that would not vote for Albania's membership into EU if a referendum were held tomorrow. Overall vast majority of respondents, 89%, were in favor of Albania's EU membership. This figure marks a drop of 10% compared to two years ago, when overall 99 % of the respondents were in favor of Albania's EU membership. Although support for Albania's EU membership remains quite high, which reconfirms and reflects the almost popular will of Albanian society to join the EU, it is important to emphasize that the 10 % drop in support has taken place over a very short, 2 year, period.

Interestingly enough while there is a significant drop in the level of support for EU membership EU has gained in its importance as a key partner for Albania. Overall EU scored the highest in terms of its importance to Albania and came first in three out of the four surveyed categories. In 2004 as compared to 2002 EU has gained in importance over other states such as the USA that are considered strategic partners to Albania. Thus, although support for Albania's EU membership has dropped as compared to two years ago, the importance of EU to Albania has increased.

At first sight the above seems a contradictory conclusion, but a closer look at the data reveals that both processes are quite possible, i.e. a drop in membership for EU support and an increasing importance of EU to Albania. The reason for this is that the drop in absolute support for EU membership is not simply due to an increasing anti-European feeling amongst respondents. The drop in support for Albania's EU membership comes primarily due to an increased level of pessimism regarding Albania's prospects to join EU. In fact it is those who think that it will take Albania longer to join EU that have a higher tendency not to vote for EU membership. The falling number of those who are in favor of Albania's EU membership is primarily a reflection of the growing frustration amongst respondents with the integration process in general. In fact in 2004 respondents have much more pessimistic assessments regarding Albania's integration timeframe as compared to 2002. This is amongst the most important changes that have taken place during the last two years. This means that better membership prospects for Albania's EU membership will have a positive impact on support levels for such process.

The drop in the absolute support for Albania's EU membership may come as a result of a better understanding of the cost that integration entails. It may also indicate disillusionment considering the extremely high initial expectations of respondents who in 2002 had high expectations that Albania would soon join EU. The drop in support for EU membership might also reflect a better understanding of the conditionalities that form the bases of EU approach towards Albania and its neighbors. No matter what the cause or causes of the drop in support for EU membership the fact remains that Albania seems to have started reflecting the trend experienced in the Eastern European countries that joined EU on May 1st. In most of these countries support for EU membership started growing thin as the actual membership date approached. Croatia is a good example in this regard. The country

is expected to start negotiations early next year and support for EU membership lingers at critical limits, 49%.⁴

What we are witnessing in Albania is the birth of resistance to EU membership after a long period of unconditional and almost absolute support for the process by the social and political elite as well as by the population at large. The business community seems to be the leading social group in this regard. This community has begun to put up increasing resistance against reforms that the Albanian government has to undertake under EU pressure, in the SAA framework⁵. Such interest driven resistance that can be also found elsewhere in the accession and candidate countries is combined with skepticism and disillusionment regarding the stages of the integration process, as reflected in the fact that most respondents see EU membership as quite distant in time.

Only 7.5 percent of Albanians think that Albania will join EU within the future 5 years, whereas in 2002 this figure was 38.7 %. There is a drop of more than 30 % in the number of people that think that EU membership will happen very soon. In 2004 the majority of respondents, think that it will take Albania 10 to 15 years to join EU. In 2002 on the other hand, 71 % of the respondents thought that a maximum of ten years would be necessary for Albania to join EU. These findings are true across all four categories. Overall, the percentage of respondents who feel the integration process is proceeding too slowly has significantly increased.

On the one hand this phenomenon is positive as it shows that all categories sustain a better and more realistic understanding of the integration process. Two years after the official opening of SAA negotiations there seems to be a better understanding of this process.⁶ There is a positive trend in the level of knowledge on the European union within the four surveyed categories: public administration, business, media and NGO community. They are more familiar with EU and its institutions in 2004 as compared to 2002. In the same fashion their understanding of the EU integration process has improved compared to two years ago. The 2002 expectation that Albania would join EU in five years was highly unrealistic and indicated above all a lack of understanding of the EU integration in general and Stabilization and Association Process in particular.

Despite an increased level of knowledge and understanding of the integration process a substantial percentage, 35 %, think that Brussels should accept Albania before she is prepared for membership. This misconception becomes even more problematic if we take into consideration that categories under analysis are amongst the most informed ones about conditions and criteria Albania has to meet in order to become a EU member. It is important to emphasize that there is some positive change in this regard in 2004 as compared to 2002. Overall the percentage of those who think that EU should accept Albania even before the country has met the required criteria is smaller,

⁴ Balkan Crisis Report: Drago Hedl in Osijek: Croatians' Enthusiasm for EU falls. Analysts state that citizens tend to relate poor economic performance, high unemployment and trade balance deficits to the government's EU accession efforts.

⁵ It was argued that obligations deriving from the SAA might have negative implications for a part of the business community. Albanian economy is not competitive enough to open up to the regional market.

⁶ The SAA negotiation seems to have contributed in forming more realistic perceptions on the integration process.

35 %, in 2004 as opposed to 45 %, in 2002. This development is also reflected in the fact that in 2004 the perceived importance of EU's stance towards Albania is less important for the country's integration as compared to 2002. Domestic factors, such as Albanian politics, economic development, corruption and rule of law have gained in importance. While the functioning of democracy in Albania was perceived in 2002 as one of the important factors for the acceleration of the process, this year the fight against organized crime and corruption is considered as determining, even more than the development of economy. Therefore, there is a growing awareness that EU integration is not a process that starts in Brussels and ends in Tirana, but vice versa.

It is probable that such awareness is a consequence of EU's emphasis on Albanian domestic processes such as the fight against corruption and free and fair elections.⁷ In fact there seems to be an expectation that once Albania holds free and fair elections it will automatically sign the SAA. Therefore, it is important to emphasize that free and fair elections are a necessary but not sufficient factor in order to sign SAA. Otherwise high expectations may again create ground for disappointment and decline of support for Albania's EU accession.

Some important misconceptions about integration remain the same after 2 years. All the surveyed categories continue to perceive free movement as the major benefit of EU membership. Thus, free movement is evaluated as more important than economic development, consolidation of democracy and the rule of law. Part of the reason for this is the fact that free movement is expected to be a more immediate benefit. However, no matter what the reason this finding confirms that fifteen years after the collapse of the extreme isolation regime of the country, free movement opportunities still represent a major concern of Albanian society. This should not be interpreted as a mere wish to flee the country: the observed categories face relatively less difficulties in traveling abroad than the rest of the population. Such expectation might also indicate a growing distaste with the burdensome and at times humiliating visa granting procedures.

The growing disillusionment with Albania's EU integration process will be problematic in both the short and long term since this process has been presented as a magic panacea for all of Albania's ills by the government and political parties for their short-term political interests. Therefore, the longer respondents think it will take Albania to join EU the lower will be their support for EU membership and their perceptions of the benefits to be derived from the integration process. This will also produce deteriorating perceptions on EU in general. The implications here are manifold both for Albania and for EU's stance towards her. As support for EU membership erodes so will EU leverage *vis a vis* Albanian authorities, which will in turn undermine the promotion of democratization based on EU integration conditionalities. Unless Albania's integration process returns back on track and unless membership EU membership prospects become more tangible and less distant in time, support for EU membership will continue to drop along with expected benefits from such membership. This might start a viscous circle in which as support for EU membership drops, the integration process slows down, which in turn decelerates the integration process even further.

⁷ The latest two or three declarations of the EU presidency, as well as other official EU statements have addressed this issue in the last months.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

The data clearly indicates a growing frustration and disillusionment with the EU integration process in Albania, which has in turn produced a drop in support levels for Albania's EU membership. This is the main challenge that Albania's EU integration process faces; it risks becoming mere rhetoric and slowly fading away into irrelevance for the public at large. The main objective should thus be to revive this process and make it increasingly tangible for the population at large, not through rhetoric, but through concrete actions. This is no simple task that requires the efforts and cooperation of many actors, starting from the Albanian Government, which is by far the most important and responsible actor, to the EU institutions and countries.

Such efforts should first focus on the short term and immediate steps of the integration process such as the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. This agreement implies free movement of persons, goods, services and capital; in this context, the requirement of Albanian citizens for freedom of movement is completely legitimate. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to:

- Deepen reforms and investments in security institutions, law enforcing bodies, as well as institutions that supply services to citizens; preparation of identity cards for citizens, alongside modernisation, computerisation and building of an integrated system for the institutions responsible for providing passports, identity cards, certificates, and other documents.
- Clear demonstration and guarantee to European Union countries with regard to border control and management.
- Requirements from the part of the Albanian Government to provide facilitations for the freedom of movement to European Union countries, such as by relaxing the visa regime.

A more relaxed visa regime would be the first immediate benefit that the Albanian public would enjoy and associate with the EU integration process, which would in turn increase support levels for the process as a whole. Of course this requires major efforts by the Albanian Government first and EU institutions and countries second.

This is not to say that EU integration should be understood as a visa free regime, which is one of the existing misunderstandings of the process. Nor is it correct to conclude that EU integration is only the business of the Government, which is another misunderstanding. European integration and the Stabilisation and Association Agreement are not concerns of the Government solely, even less an issue exclusively pertaining to the negotiating group, directed by the Ministry for Integration. In order to enhance participation and efforts in the integration process and in order not to reduce its perceived benefits only to a visa free regime it is necessary to:

- Establish cooperation with other actors outside of state structures; establish effective cooperation with independent centres and research institutes in the country, so as to use their expertise in the process of European integration.

- Currently, notwithstanding the rhetoric regarding the values of the so-called civil society and need of cooperation with it, the Government is inattentive towards civil society products, be them in the form of civic movements, or research in the fields of economy, security etc.
- Undertake a specialized information campaign to acquaint the public with benefits and implications of Albania's potential EU membership. Whilst free movement into EU countries seems to be the main benefit of EU accession even for the more specialized and educated groups of the society, this expectation is likely to be much higher and stronger for the rest of the society.
- Highlight in more concrete terms the reforms needed to for the European integration process, aiming at improving the understanding of the integration process as a process of internal reforms. Although the word "reform" is used and abused frequently, it is rarely define beyond "improving institutions".

Support for Albania's accession into the European Union continues to be prevalent. Albanian decision-makers should take advantage of such support in order to mobilize the society for reform implementation. However, EU integration support has dropped by ten percent in a two years period. A number of reforms to be implemented in the framework of EU integration and of the Stabilisation Association Process have encountered resistance from different categories of the society, especially business. It becomes necessary to:

- Perform studies and analyses on the immediate economic effects of obligations that the Stabilisation Association Agreement bestows on Albania. Such analyses should be made public especially to the business community in large and local entrepreneurs in particular, as this community will be the first to contend with the economic costs of integration.
- The Government should continue the dialogue with the business community with regard to issues related to potential consequences coming out of the Stabilisation Association Agreement.
- It is necessary to shed light on the Stabilisation Association Agreement, determining factors for its signing, and timeframes needed for the implementation of the Agreement, in order to prevent the consolidation of unrealistic expectations, which may be followed by disillusionment.
- Enhance the transparency of state institutions engaged in the European integration process, i.e. Stabilisation Association Agreement. Despite the fall in enthusiasm and more realistic time expectations, significant misperceptions persist. It is necessary to call attention to the fact that integration is not conditional on predetermined deadlines. The public should be informed on criteria to be met, hardships to be faced, and factors that may accelerate or hinder the integration process.

- It is important to emphasise that addressing domestic negative phenomena, such as corruption and organized crime, is not simply a requirement of the European Union but a first and foremost imperative for the country's development.

Albanians indicate the European Union as a strategic partner, with whom the Government should strengthen ties. Nevertheless, limited information is conveyed in relation with EU and its institutions, and particularly as regards the European integration project. It is necessary to:

- Organise trainings with Albanian media, in view of its important information role, which is in turn related to general expectations. Organise a public awareness campaign, to include a media campaign - TV programs and documentaries; publications; lectures, and workshops on European integration not only in Tirana, but in other regions as well.
- Enable exchange of experiences for experts, journalists, and academia representatives with counterparts from countries with similar backgrounds, as Western Balkan countries that are at the same integration stage as Albania, or the new Eastern European EU members.

III. SURVEY FINDINGS

III.1 Support for EU accession

The vast majority of respondents, 89.25 % said they would vote in favor of Albania's EU membership if a referendum were held tomorrow. Only 5.25 % said they would vote against, while the rest, 5.50 %, were undecided. The data indicates the existing high support for the country's efforts to join the European Union, a top priority for the Albanian Government. Therefore, such high support is quite encouraging as it shows a much needed coherence between stated Government priorities and those of some important Albanian social categories. However, although support for EU membership remains high there is a decreasing trend in comparison with the support level in 2002, when the percentage of respondents in favor of EU membership amounted to over 98%. See Figure 1.

Question. Suppose tomorrow there were a referendum in order to decide whether Albania should join European Union (EU) or not, how would you vote Would you vote for or against Albania's membership into EU??

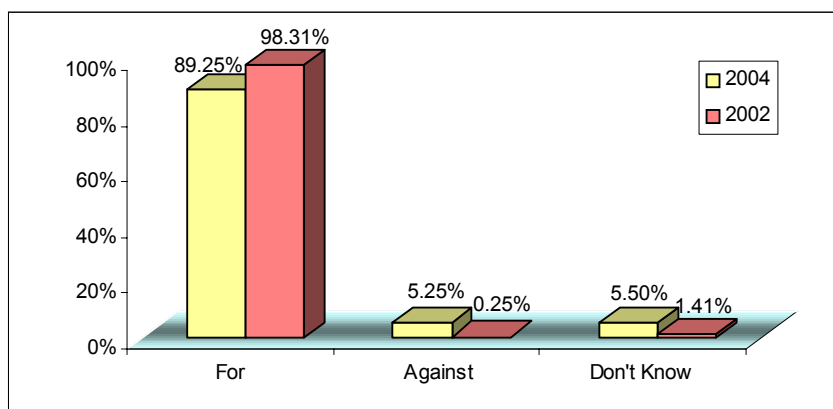


Figure 1. Level of Support for Albania's Membership into EU – General Sample

Answers according to categories presents a similar situation: in the same fashion as in 2002, the vast majority of respondents across categories are in favor of Albania's EU membership, with a decreasing trend in membership support from 2002 to 2004 across all four categories. As shown in Figure 2, support for EU membership has decreased across all categories, although at different rates.

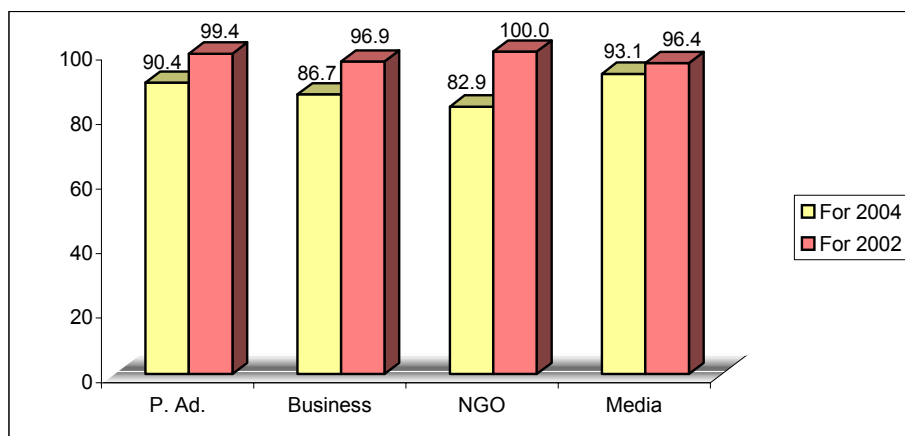


Figure 2. Level of Support for Albania's Membership into EU according to Categories

The most drastic change can be identified within the NGO category, where there is a significant drop of around 17 % in support for EU membership from 2002 to 2004. The second most significant drop for EU membership, at around 10 %, from 2002 to 2004, has taken place in the Business category, with the Public Administration following very closely with a drop of around 9%. The Media category is the only one which seems to have sustained more or less stable support level from 2002 to 2004, with a slight drop of 3 %, part of which could be attributed to sampling error. It is worth mentioning that in both NGO and Public Administration categories the number of those who would vote against EU membership if a referendum were held tomorrow has increased at a much higher rate than the percentage of those who were undecided, as compared to the other two categories. This is indicative of higher decline rate with regard to Albania's EU membership in these categories.

It is interesting to notice that while in 2002 the Media category had the lowest support levels for Albania's EU membership, at 96.43%, in 2004 the same category is the one with the highest levels of support for Albania's EU membership at 93.10 %. However, despite the declining trend, support for EU membership is extremely high in all categories, which again highlights the Albanian aspirations to become an integral part of the European family. This is also reflected on the importance that respondents assign to Albania's relations with the EU. See Figure 3.

Question: In your opinion how much importance should Government place to strengthening Albania's relations with the following states/organizations? Please evaluate in a scale from 1 to 10, bearing in mind that the higher the number the more importance should, in your opinion, the Albanian government pay to strengthening the ties with the given State/Organization.

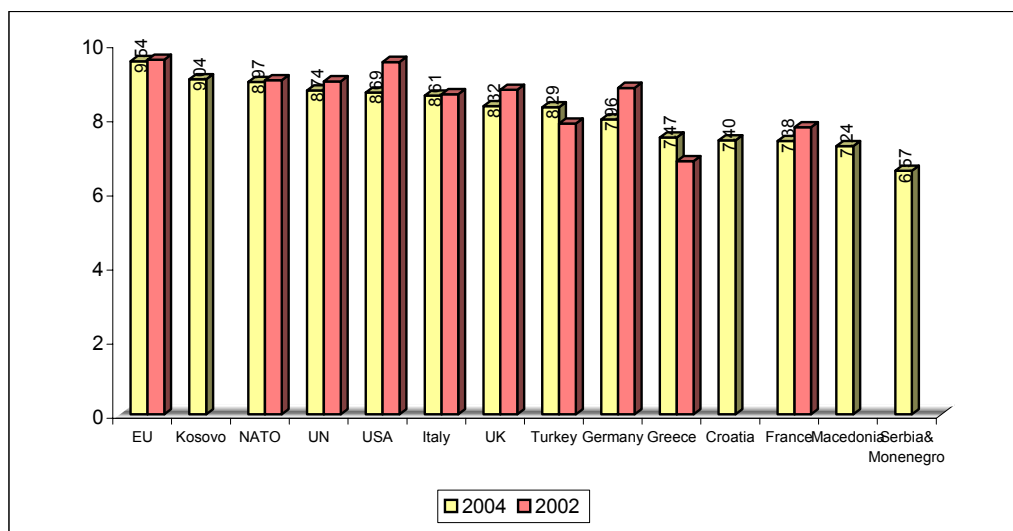


Figure 3. Albania's International Partners – 2004 - 2002 General Sample

As shown in Figure 3, when asked to evaluate on a scale from 1 to 10 the importance that the Government should pay to strengthening Albania's relations with some 14 states/organizations, EU scored the highest, 9.54 out of 10. Not only did EU score the highest, it also had the lowest standard deviation (see Table 1) which means that the answers on EU varied very little, i.e., respondents were in general agreement on the importance that Government should pay to strengthening Albania's relations with EU.

	EU	Kosovo	NATO	UN	USA	Italy	UK	Turkey	Germany	Greece	Croatia	France	Macedonia	Serb & Montng
Mean	9.54	9.04	8.97	8.74	8.69	8.61	8.32	8.29	7.96	7.47	7.40	7.38	7.24	6.57
Std. Dev.	1.33	1.00	1.68	1.86	2.23	2.05	2.20	1.94	2.35	2.71	2.32	2.49	2.39	2.66

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation for the General Sample – 2002

Furthermore the above figure also shows that the importance that respondents attach to Albania's relations with EU has remained the same, very high. In 2002 EU scored 9.57 out of 10, whereas in 2004 this figure was at 9.54, practically the same as in 2004 if we also allow for a very small margin of error. Thus, EU has sustained its importance as a partner to Albania, while some actors such as USA and Germany have scored less than in 2002, while others such as Greece and Turkey have gained in importance from 2002 to 2004. In the case of Greece part of the explanation lies with the fact that during 2002 when the first survey was taking place there was a widely televised incident in the Greek – Albanian border, which seems to have adversely affected perceptions on Greece.

EU also scored highest in each of the categories with the exception of the media category in which the respondents prioritized on Albania's relations with the United States of America and than with EU. See Figure 4.

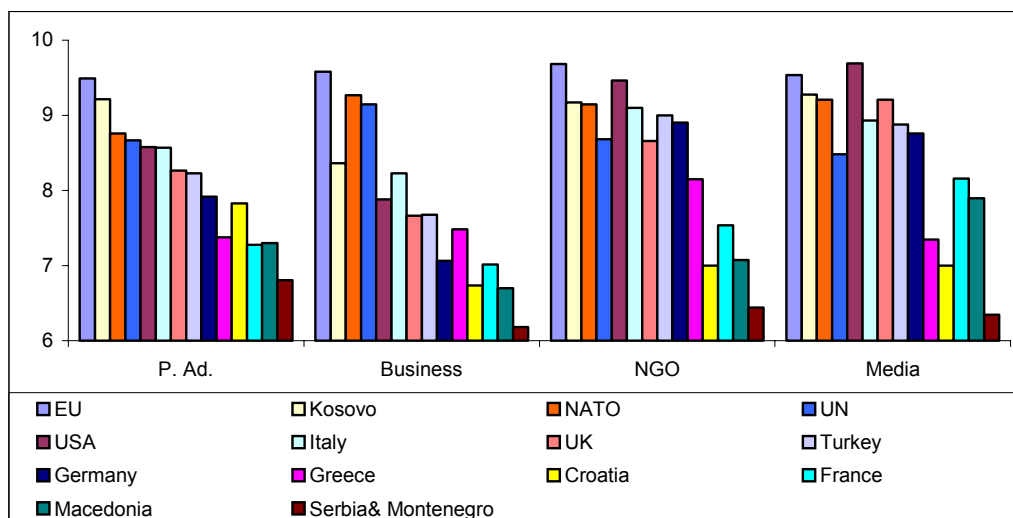


Figure 4. Importance of Albania's Ties with International Partners Across Categories - 2004

At first sight these data seem to contradict the earlier ones on support for EU membership, which was in decline in all categories, although at a slower rate in the Media one. Thus, on the one hand, from 2002 to 2004, we have a drop in the percentage of those that would vote for Albania's membership into EU if a referendum were held tomorrow, while on the other hand EU remains the most important partner for Albania, while also becomes even more important in comparison to other international actors such as the USA in 2004 as compared to 2002. This "paradox" becomes clearer in the Media category, which during 2004 has the highest percentage of those that would vote in favor of EU membership while at the same time ranking the USA as the most important partner for Albania, while in the other categories EU was ranked first. If we observe the coherence of respondents' attitude towards the EU as a strategic partner, in comparison with the declining support for Albania's EU membership, one may come to the conclusion that the correlation between the two issues is not as strong. On the one hand, the affinity of Albanians with the EU and its structures, may be further argued by the respondents' considerations for the importance of strengthening ties with the other entities: While in 2002 USA followed closely behind the EU with a score of 9.51, in this year's survey NATO and UN⁸ have clearly preceded USA (which has declined to 8.7), most probably backed by the recent controversies and unambiguous divergences between these entities upon the Middle East conflict. This may be interpreted as a sign of the backing of the EU/UN policy rather than that of the US. However, on the other hand, this may also indicate a the persistence of the general empathy among Albanians for the EU, while a part of them would prefer a close partnership relation, rather than membership, i.e. in the same fashion as Switzerland – though that might not be viable for a country like Albania.

Such "incompatibility" of data points to another interesting phenomenon; the maturity of respondents *vis a vis* the integration process. After the opening of the negotiations for the Stabilization and Association Process Albania's EU membership, despite the current slow down seems to have become a foreseeable eventuality. This

⁸ The fact that Kosovo, a new entry in this year's survey, comes second after EU is easily understandable in view of the strong historic ties, and sense of national belonging.

means that the concern is not so much whether Albania should join EU but when and how should Albania do so. This is why even those whom would vote against Albania's membership in a referendum held tomorrow; consider EU the most important partner for Albania.

This maturity is also evident in the fact that in 2004 a smaller percentage of people responded that EU should accept Albania even if she is not ready as compared to 2002. EU membership seems to be less of an end in itself. Respondents seem to be increasingly aware of the conditions, costs and benefits of EU membership. This could explain the way support for EU membership has changed from an absolute massive unconditional support to a more mature, albeit, slightly reduced one.

Question. Do you think European Union (EU) should admit Albania into EU even before Albania is prepared to become a member of EU?

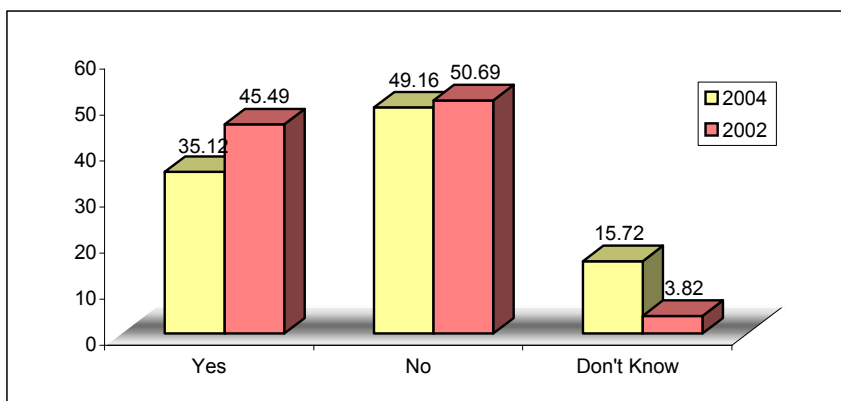


Figure 5. Should EU Admit Albania Before She Is Prepared? –General Sample (2004 vs. 2002)

The answers among categories while varied considerably had one thing in common; in all the categories the majority of respondents said that EU should not accept Albania before she is ready for membership. Media was the sole category where the percentage of “Yes” answers was very low: only 7.8%. This is interesting given that the Media category sustains the highest support for Albania's EU membership. See Figure 6.

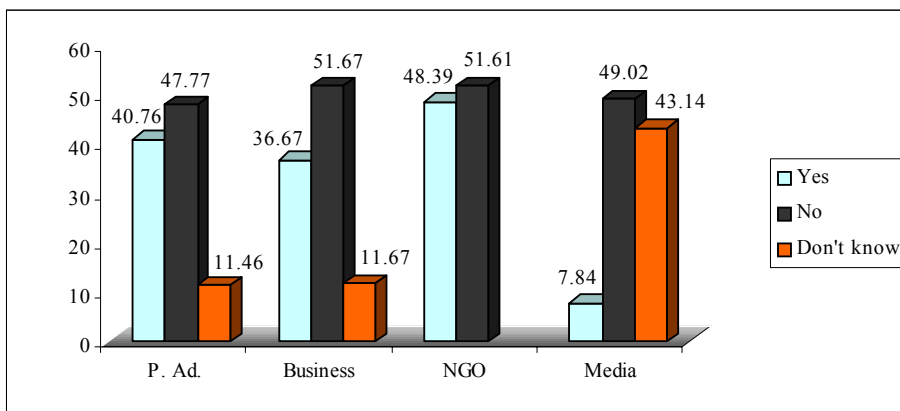


Figure 6. Should EU admit Albania Before She Is Prepared? – According to Categories, 2004

If we compare the above answers with those in 2002, we see a clear trend of decline in “Yes” answers, to the question whether EU should admit Albania into EU before she is prepared. This is a positive development in as far as it indicates that the EU integration process is understood as one that bears costs and consequences and not as an end in itself. Yet, it is important to emphasize that a substantive percentage of the respondents think that EU should admit Albania before she is ready to become a member. This could be explained in part by the desire of respondents for Albania to join EU.

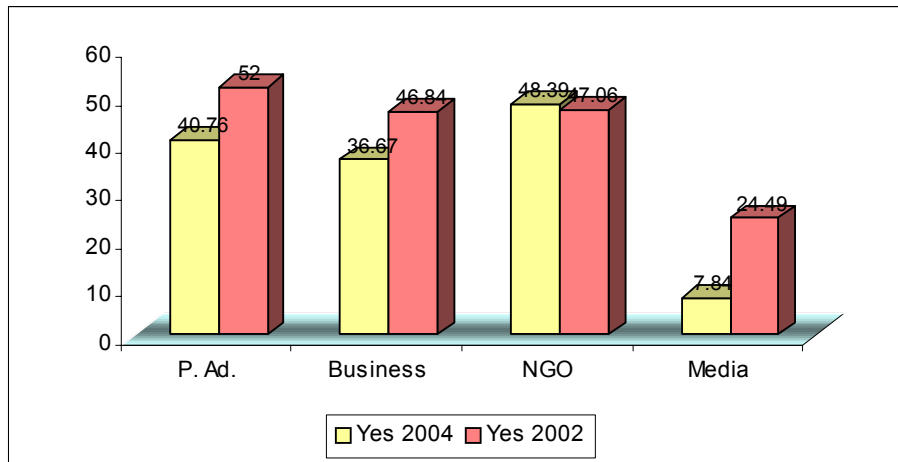


Figure 7. Should EU admit Albania Before She Is Prepared? – According to Categories, 2002 vs. 2004

III.2 Expectations

The above section analyzed the level of support regarding Albania’s EU membership in four chosen categories of Media, Public Administration, NGOs and Businesses, in Tirana. In order to understand this support we also have to assess perceptions and expectations regarding Albania’s EU membership. Of particular importance here are the respondents’ expectations regarding benefits from Albania’s EU membership.

Expectations explain in great part the overwhelming support for Albania’s EU membership. The major benefit that the respondents expect Albania to derive from EU membership is the free movement of people into EU countries; this option scored the highest at 9.3. The next most important expected benefit was strengthening the rule of law and democratic consolidation, scoring respectively 8.94 and 8.68. Economic development and well being come last, with respectively 8.31 and 7.66 points out of 10. It is important to note that all the expected benefits scored quite high, over 7.5, which is indicative of the high expectations that respondents have developed for Albania’s EU membership. See Figure 8.

Question. People have different opinions on the benefits that Albania will derive from EU membership. In your opinion how much will Albania benefit in the following areas? Please evaluate in a 1 to 10 scale, bearing in mind that the higher the number the more you think Albania will benefit in the given area.

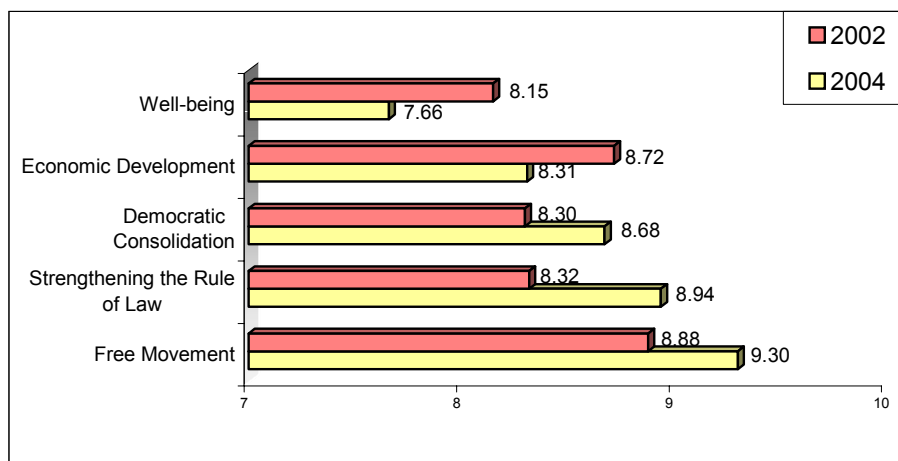


Figure 8. Benefits from EU Membership for Albania –General Sample

Patterns of expected benefits were quite similar in 2004 with those of 2002. Typical of both cases is the high enthusiasm for the free movement opportunities into EU countries. Indeed, in 2004 respondents are even more enthusiastic about this expected benefit than in 2002 (the option scored 9.3 in 2004 and 8.9 in 2002). This could be explained by the fact that after the opening of the negotiations for the Stabilization and Association Agreement there was much talk in the media and public forums about the possibility of a visa free regime once this agreement would be signed. So free movement is viewed as the most immediate benefit from the integration process, which explains also its highest score. The next most important expected benefit in 2002 was economic development, whereas in 2004 strengthening the rule of law comes second. This is another interesting development that points to a more mature understanding of the integration process, while also reflecting some degree of disillusionment. In 2002 the EU integration process was perceived as one that would pour financial aid from EU to Albania and thus produce economic development. In 2004, and especially given the enlargement of EU with new members such expectations seem to have declined, which is why economic development does not come second. Furthermore given the generally critical stance of the international community on lack of rule of law in Albania, and high perception levels on corruption and bad governance, strengthening rule of law is perceived as another immediate benefit that EU membership would produce.

Of the four categories the Business one had the lowest scores. The standard deviation in the Business group was also the highest, which means that answers varied in this category more than in the other ones. See Table 2 and Figure 9.

	P. Ad.		Business		NGO		Media	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Democratic Consolidation	8.60	1.72	7.86	2.2	9.49	0.81	9.53	1.06
Economic Development	8.30	1.70	7.4	1.98	8.95	1.34	9.17	1.13
Well-being	7.58	1.98	6.71	2.48	8.15	1.80	8.97	1.28
Strengthening the Rule of Law	8.90	1.49	8.22	1.78	9.54	0.90	9.69	0.65
Free Movement	9.29	1.46	8.9	1.71	9.54	0.81	9.74	0.74
Total (Mean Percentage Points)	42.69		39.08		45.66		47.10	

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation According to Categories 2004

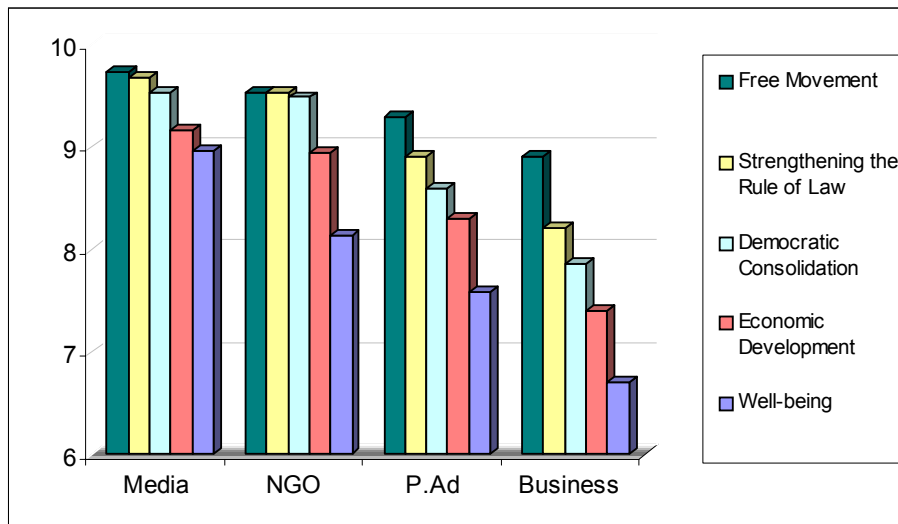


Figure 9. Benefits from EU Membership for Albania – 2004 Categories

Overall Media was the category that had the highest expectations from EU membership, which could partially explain why this category sustains the highest support for Albania's EU membership. Businesses on the other hand have the lowest expectations, which might indicate that this category is growing skeptical of the process, perhaps concerned with the immediate cost that it has to face. Despite these differences, in all four categories free movement came scored the highest; it is the main benefit that it is expected by EU membership. This is the same trend that was present in 2002.

One important change that has taken place during the 2002 – 2004 period across all four categories is that respondents have evaluated Democratic Consolidation and Strengthening of the Rule of Law as more important than Economic Development in 2004, as compared to 2002 when economic considerations came second after free movement opportunities. This is also reflected in the general sample. The reason for such change could be found in the growing perceptions of corruption and bad governance in Albania. Therefore, EU membership with its requirements on good governance and democratization might be perceived as way of addressing these issues.

The increasing emphasis on rule of law and democratization as benefits of EU membership once more indicates a more matured and realistic group of respondents. It reflects a better understanding of the integration process and of the standards required for it to be completed. It also shows a higher awareness of the importance of rule of law and democratization in this process, and a more sober evaluation of the steps Albania has to take in order to become a member of the European Union. An increasingly realistic perception of the integration process is also reflected in the answers given by respondents when asked about the number of years that it would take Albania to join EU. The vast majority of respondents, 85%, thought that it will take more than ten years for Albania to join EU, with more than 50% marking 15 years or more. See Figure 10.

Question. There exist different opinions regarding the number of years that it will take Albania to become a member of European Union. In your opinion how long will

it take for Albania to join EU? Will it take 5 years, 10 years, 15 years, or do you think that Albania will never become a member of EU?

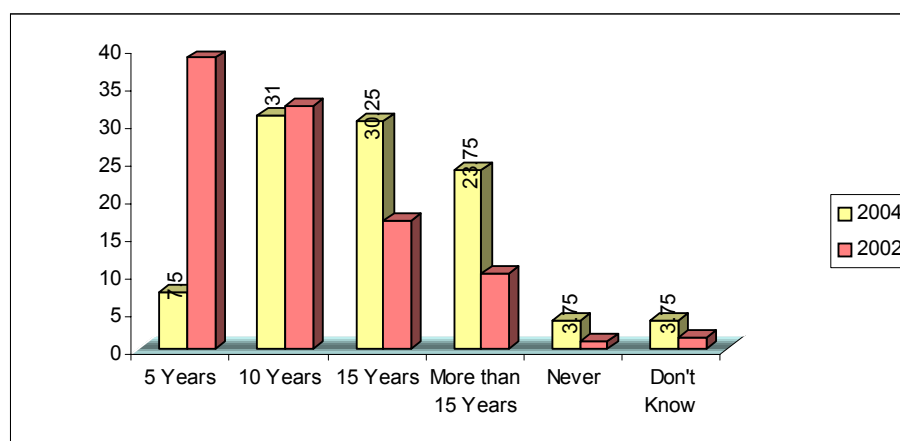


Figure 10. The Number of Years For Albania to Join EU – 2004 General Sample

As the above figure shows there is a major change on the time expectation for Albania's EU membership. In 2004 respondents are less optimistic with regard to the time that it will take Albania to join EU as compared to 2002. Such change can be explained through two main reasons. First the stalled SAA process and declarations by high EU officials that given the current pace of reforms it will take Albania at least 15 years to join EU have directly impacted perceptions in the surveyed groups. Second, a better understanding of the integration process and its steps such as the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) has also produced a more realistic assessment of timeframes. It is interesting to notice from Figure 5 that only 3.75% of the respondents responded that Albania would never become a member of EU. Thus, despite the variations of responses in terms of years one thing that almost all respondents shared was the fact that they all thought that Albania will become someday a member of EU.⁹

The same was true for each of the categories where negligible percentages of respondents doubted that Albania would ever become a member of EU, with the exception of the Business category, where almost 10 percent of the populations stated that Albania would never become member of EU. The NGO category seems to be the most optimistic, with over 41 percent of respondents designating a 5-10 years timeframe for Albania's accession in EU, only 14.6 percent believing it shall take more than 15 years, and no members doubting the eventual occurrence of this event. The Public Administration category follows close behind, with 68% indicating a 5-15 years period, but a higher percentage of those thinking more than 15 years shall prove necessary. The Media and especially Business categories are more pessimistic: whereas Media has the highest category percentage of "15 Years" answers, the Business category has the lowest category percentage of "Within 5 Years" answers; and highest of "More than 15 Years" and "Never" answers. See Figure 11.

⁹ However, the fact that this percentage has increased as opposed to 2002 (from 0.85% to 3.75%, thus still remaining a minor percentage) may be indicative of a sense of disappointment developed during the recent two years.

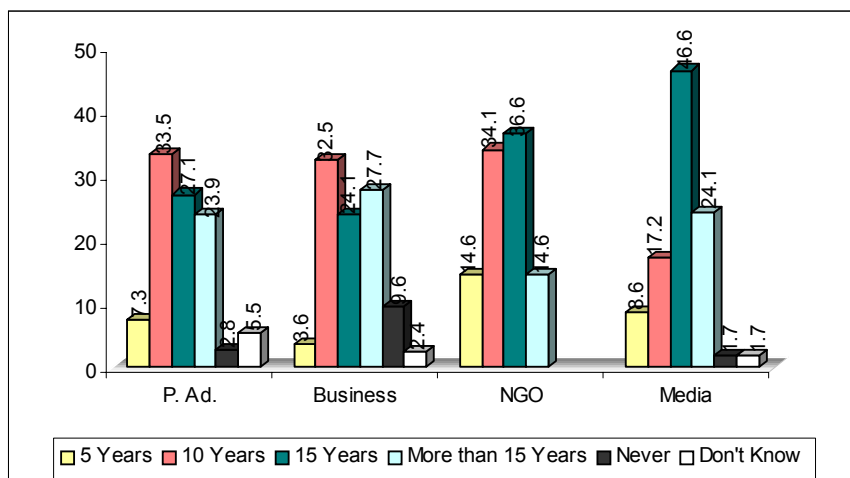


Figure 11. The Number of Years For Albania to Join EU – 2004 Categories

If we compare the above figures with those of 2002, we see that there is a drastic change in time perceptions. Albania's EU membership has become more distant in 2004 as compared to 2002. The most drastic change has taken place in the Business category where there is a drop of more than 50% in the percentage of those that think Albania will join EU in five years. See Figure 12.

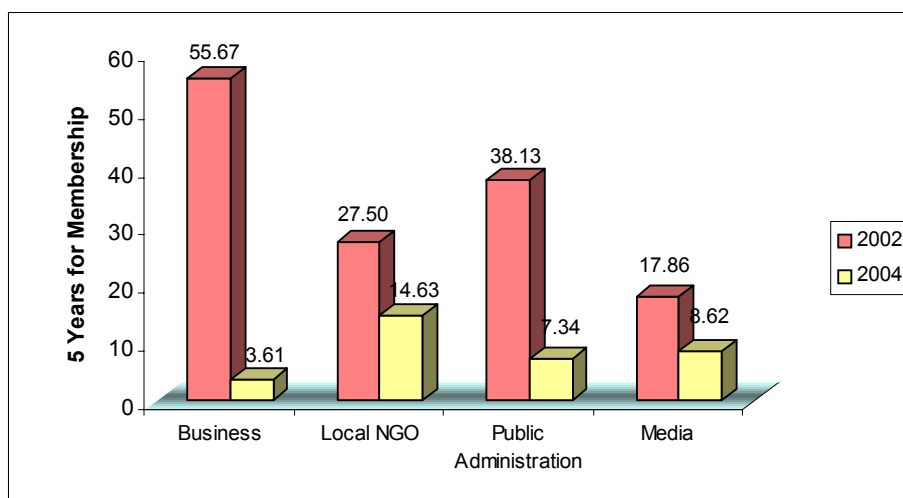


Figure 12. A Comparison of 2004 with 2002 – The Percentage of Those Who Thought Albania Will Join EU in 5 Years.

The fact that prospects for EU membership have grown distant is also reflected in the fact that most respondents thought that the integration process is taking place either slow or very slow. Here again the answers seem to reflect the deceleration of the integration process after the opening of the SAA negotiations some two years ago. In 2004 respondents are more pessimistic regarding the time it will take Albania to become a EU member as compared to 2002. See Figure 13.

Question. Different people have different opinions regarding the speed of the process of Albanian integration into EU. In your opinion how is this process taking place? Fast, slow, very slow, not moving at all?

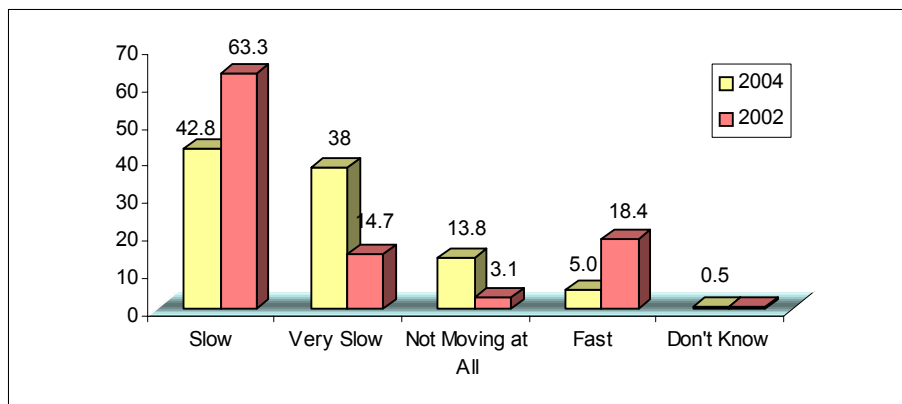


Figure 13. The Speed of the Integration Process – General Sample 2004 vs. 2002

As Figure 6 indicates, the vast majority of respondents in 2004, 95 % thought that the process was moving either slowly or not moving at all, whereas in 2002, this percentage was 82 %. Furthermore the percentage of respondents that think the process is very slow or not moving at all has increased substantially in 2004 as compared in 2002. This is a clear indication of the growing pessimism regarding the membership date for Albania.

Such tendency was also reflected across the categories, despite some variations from one category to another. The Public Administration category was the most optimistic one with 7.34 % of the respondent answering that the process was moving fast, and the lowest percentage thinking the process was taking place-either slowly, very slowly or not at all. It is not surprising that the Public administration is the category with the most optimistic outlook on the integration process, which is after all closer to the official stand on this issue. Nevertheless, even in this category the overwhelming majority thinks that the process is either slow or not moving at all, which reflects the overall pessimism with the pace of the integration process. See Figure 14.

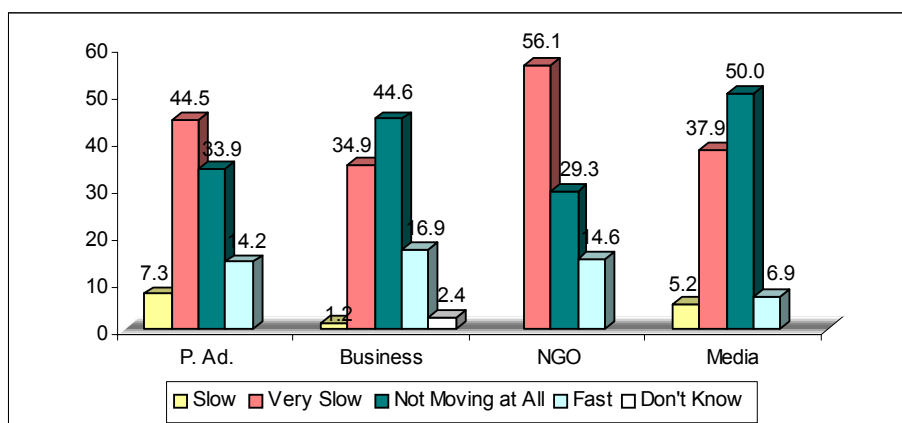


Figure 14. The Speed of the Integration Process – 2004 Categories

As in the case of the general sample comparing across categories shows the rising pessimism from 2002 to 2004. As the data in figure 15 shows the most significant changes have taken place in the Business and Media categories, which

have the largest increase in the percentage of those that think the integration process is moving slowly.

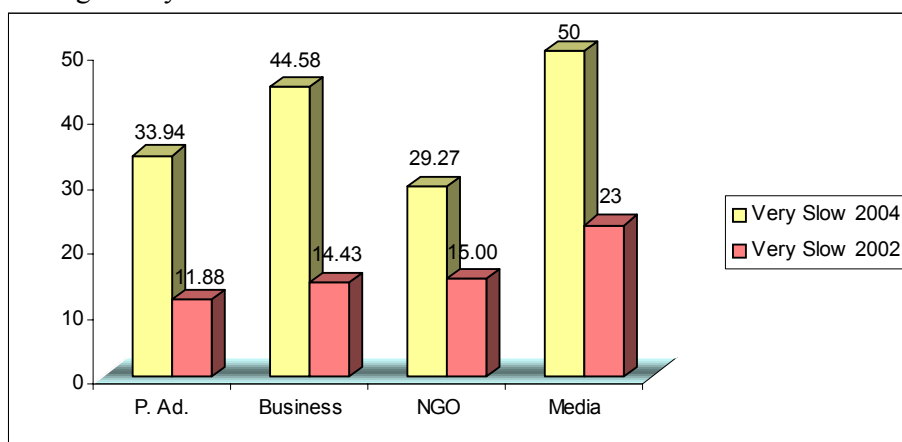


Figure 15. The Speed of the Integration Process – ‘Very Slow’ 2004 vs. 2002

The declining trend in time expectations is present across all categories. The most immediate source of the declining trend in time expectations for EU membership may have been the Stabilization and Association Agreement process. This process has affected EU membership expectations in at least two ways. First since this process has been very slow and has almost come to a halt recently, the prospects of Albania’s EU membership have become more distant in time since SAA is the very first step to EU membership. Second, Albania’s closer involvement in the SAA process has also produced more information on this process as well as more attention on the country by EU institutions, an attention that has often been broadcasted in the media in a series of declarations by EU institutions that have served to sober up the public at large with regard to the speed of the integration process and its requirements. Pessimistic expectations may have been influenced by the repeated negative comments from EU sources with reference to the progress of the Stabilization Association Process, for which the majority of respondents say will be signed in 2005 or later.

Question. Negotiations for the Stabilization Association Agreement have commenced on 31 January 2003. Different time targets have been anticipated for the signing of this agreement. In your opinion, this agreement will be signed:

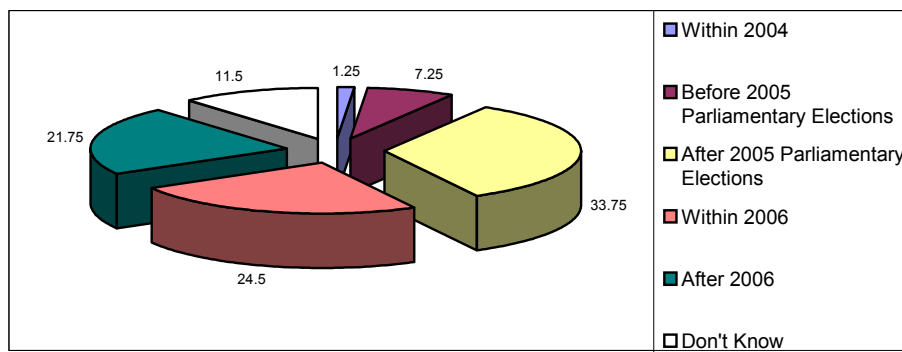


Figure 16. Expected time for Signing of SAA – 2004 – General Sample

As Figure 16 indicates, only 8.5 percent of the respondents expected that the signing of the Stabilization Association Agreement would take place before the 2005

parliamentary elections. The largest group of respondents, 33.8 percent, answered that the SAA between Albania and EU would be signed following the 2005 parliamentary elections, while the second largest group expected it to happen within 2006. A considerable percentage of respondents however, thought this would be more realistic even later, after year 2006.

The same holds true for each of the categories. The vast majority of respondents in all categories expect the SAP to be signed after the forthcoming parliamentary elections. It is interesting to notice that the next Parliamentary Elections to be held in 2005 are a crucial point for many respondents. This shows the impact on respondent's perceptions of a number of declarations by the EU Presidency and EU Commission Delegation in Tirana that have repeatedly emphasized the importance of free and fair elections for the country's development and the progress of the integration process. See Figure 17.

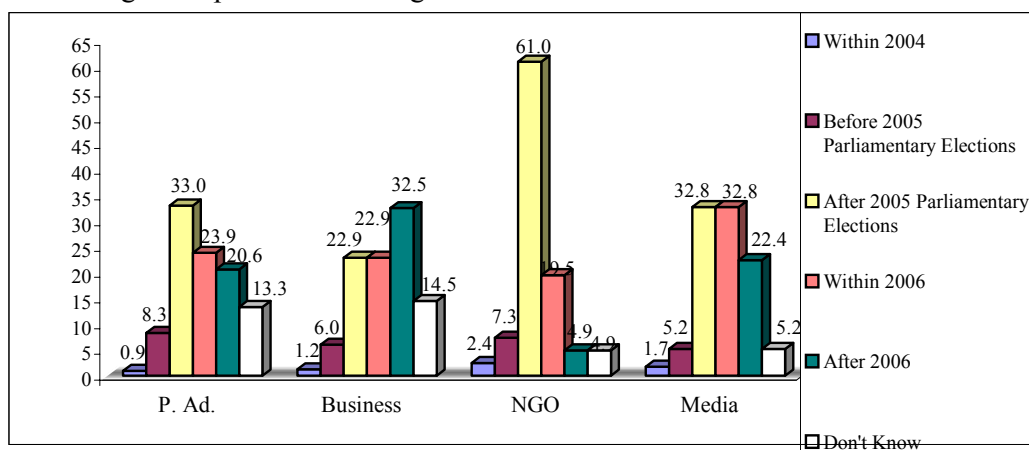


Figure 17. Expected time for Signing of SAA Across Categories – 2004

NGOs seems to be the most optimistic category, with almost 61% of respondents thinking SAA will be signed after the 2005 parliamentary elections, followed by the Public Administration, with 33% of respondents sharing the same opinion. Except within NGOs, respondents designating a timeframe beyond 2006 represent considerable percentages in all categories, especially in Business (32.5, even higher than the 2005-2006 percentages), followed by Media (22.4%) and the Public Administration (20.6%). Such high percentages of respondents who see the signing of SAA distant in time are a good explanation for one of the causes of the growing pessimism with regard to Albania's EU membership. It is safe to argue that once Albania signs the SAA respondents will have a far more optimistic assessment regarding the number of years that it will take Albania to join EU.

III.3 Understanding Determining Factors of Integration

Among the factors that were perceived as important for Albania to join EU the three main factors, in order of importance were: Albanian Politics, Elections, and the Lack of the Rule of Law. These factors scored 9.44, 9.31 and 9.31 respectively. Organized Crime came fourth at 9.2. See Figure 18.

Question. Albania's Membership into EU depends on a variety of factors. In your opinion how important are the factors below. Please evaluate in a 1 to 10 scale,

bearing in mind that the higher the number the more important you consider the factor.

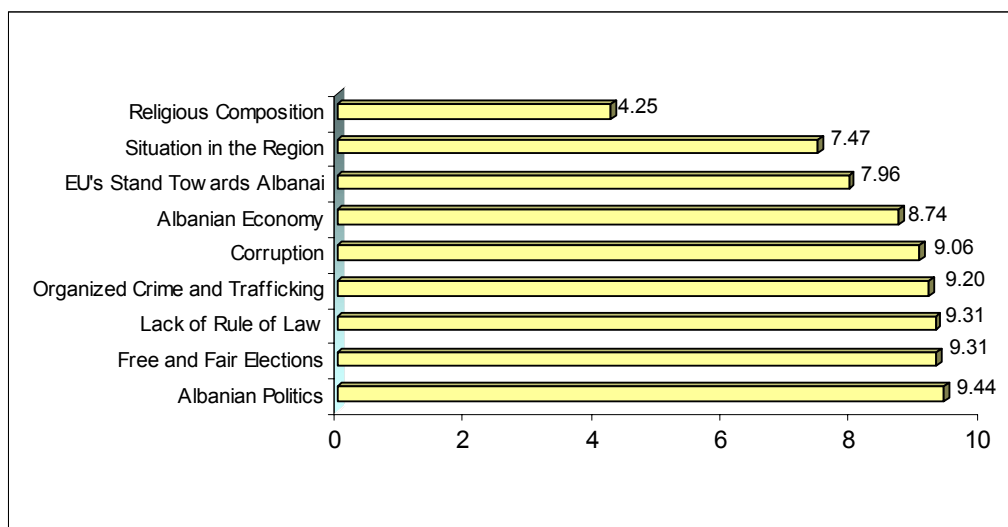


Figure 18. Factors Important for Albania's EU Membership – 2004 General Sample

With the exception of Religious composition, all factors scored high – above 7. In the same fashion as in 2002, Albanian Politics as considered as the most important factor, and is followed by Elections, Rule of Law, Organized Crime and Corruption, all having scored very close (9.44 to 9.06 respectively). It is important to notice that EU's stand towards Albania is not considered among the most important factors this year, whereas in 2002 it ranked second after politics.¹⁰

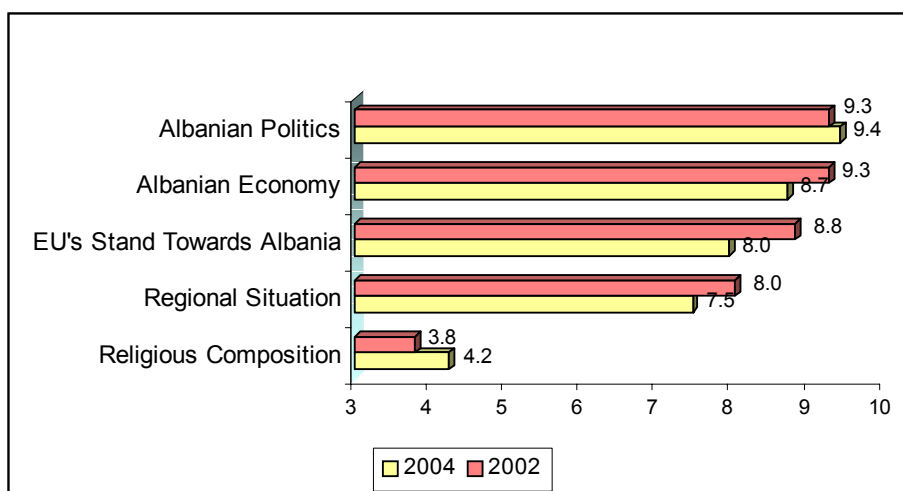


Figure 19. Factors Important for Albania's EU Membership – 2002 General Sample

The most important change that we see from 2002 to 2004 is the fact that there is an increasing importance placed on domestic as compared to international factors. Thus, regional situation and EU stand towards Albania have dropped in importance

¹⁰ However, its score is rather high in 2004 as well. It is important to point out that the score difference is not high between the two years – 7.96 in 2004 versus 8.83 in 2002. This year the survey contained a number of additional factors, which proved to be perceived as most important for our 2004 respondents.

while Albanian politics has scored slightly higher in 2004 as compared to 2002, and the Albanian economy has sustained almost the same importance. Furthermore as figure 19 shows, domestic factors such as free and fair elections, rule of law and organized crime are perceived to be more important than the regional situation and the EU stand on Albania. This is a positive development and reflects the impact of a number of declarations and stands by EU institutions emphasizing that the speed of EU integration for Albania depends on Albania's will to undertake reforms and democratize. However it is important to emphasize that EU stand towards Albania does still remain high in absolute value.

It is interesting to note that as in 2002 Religious Composition was perceived as the least important factor scoring only 3.79, with the highest standard deviation of all at 3.13, which means that there were great variations in answers even for such a low score. In 2004 there is a visible increase in the importance attached to religious composition, at 4.25, although the score remains very low compared to other factors. It is difficult to determine whether such development is only casual, or whether it has been influenced by the heated discourse on politics and religion in both the international and domestic arena.

The same trend is evident across the four surveyed categories; domestic factors are of primary importance in the EU integration process. In all categories EU stand on Albania has come either sixth, or as in the case of Business category, seventh in order of importance for EU membership, after the domestic factors. In all the categories, expect for Media, Albanian Politics was perceived as the most important factor for the membership of the country into EU. See Figure 20.

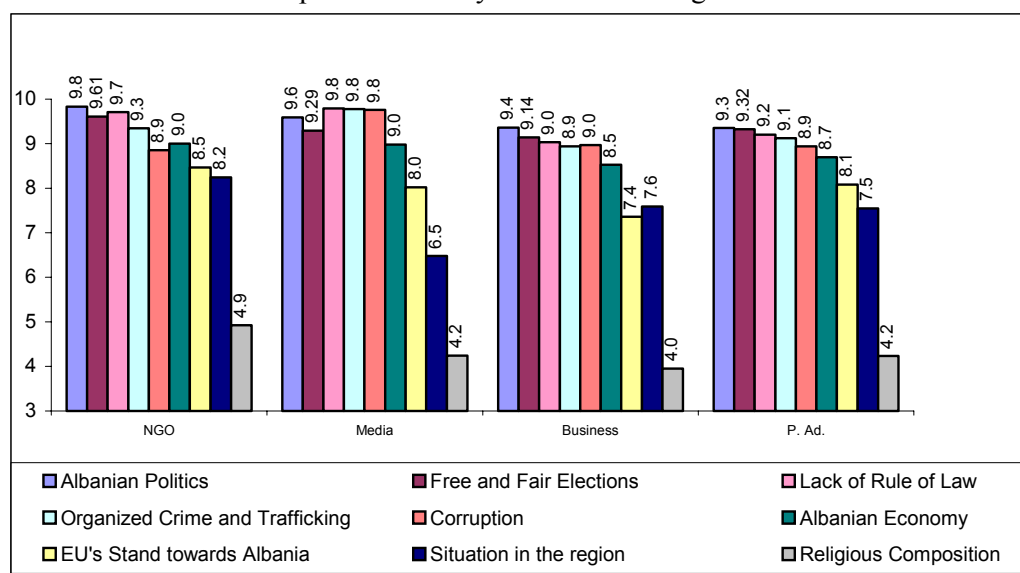


Figure 20. Factors Important for Albania's EU Membership – 2004 Categories

A comparison of results across categories between 2004 and 2004 reveals even more clearly the tendency to place greater emphasis on domestic factors. In order to do this we have compared the importance placed on EU stand towards Albania in 2004 with 2002. As Figure 21 shows there is a significant reduction in the importance placed on this factor for Albania's EU membership, especially in the Business and then Media category.

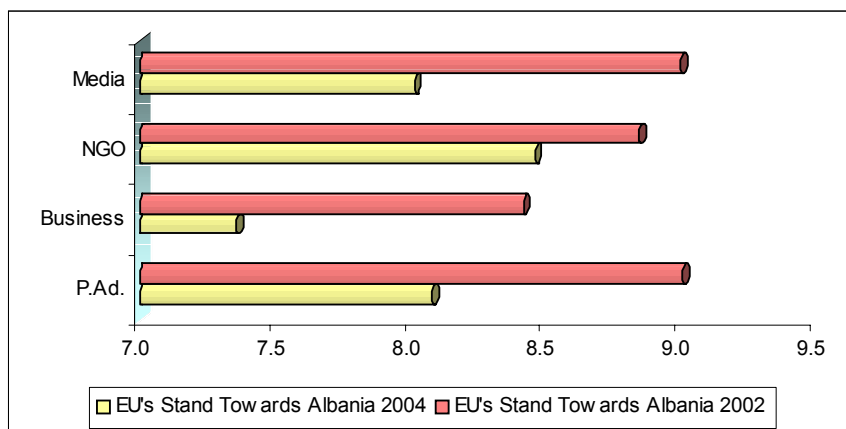


Figure 21. 'EU's Stand Towards Albania' 2002 vs. 2004

The high ranking of Albanian Politics-Elections-Rule of Law across all categories, with the lowest standard deviations, indicates that respondents view these factors as most important for the progress of the integration process. The fact that these are closely interrelated factors, and that most respondents perceived the 2005 parliamentary elections as a marking point for the signing of the SAA, reveals that the integration process is being increasingly perceived as a process that starts in Albania and ends in EU and not vice versa.

III.4 Perceptions and Information on EU

In order to assess perception on EU respondents were read five statements on EU and asked to evaluate them on an increasing scale of 1 to 10, where the higher the number the more they agreed with the statement. The first two statements pertain strictly to EU as an organization, and they attempt to assess to what extent is EU viewed as a democratic organization and to what extent it is seen as a source of peace and security in Europe. The other three deal with EU and its impact on the economy and democracy of countries outside EU. Of particular interest here is also the degree to which respondents see EU as an open organization for other European countries. As Table 3 shows EU scored highest in the first two statements, and lower in the other three. Thus, EU is perceived more positively as an organization than for its impact outside its borders.

STATEMENT	Mean	Standard Deviation
EU is a Democratic Organization	7.95	2.53
EU is a Source of Peace and Security in Europe	8.02	2.42
EU Promotes Democracy in Countries Outside EU	7.12	2.83
EU Promotes Economic Development in Countries Outside EU	6.81	2.90
EU Is Open to Accept any European Country	5.05	3.26

Table 3. EU Values – General Sample 2004

One striking development in 2004 as compared to 2002 is that EU's score has deteriorated in all the five tested aspects. Thus, in general respondents hold a less positive view of EU in 2002 as compared to 2004. The most significant change has been with regard to the degree respondents view EU as open to accept any European country. Such perception is probably a direct result of Albania's stalled integration

process, and might reflect respondents' frustration with the EU integration process. The second most significant change is in the degree to which respondents perceive EU as a democratic organization. See Figure 22.

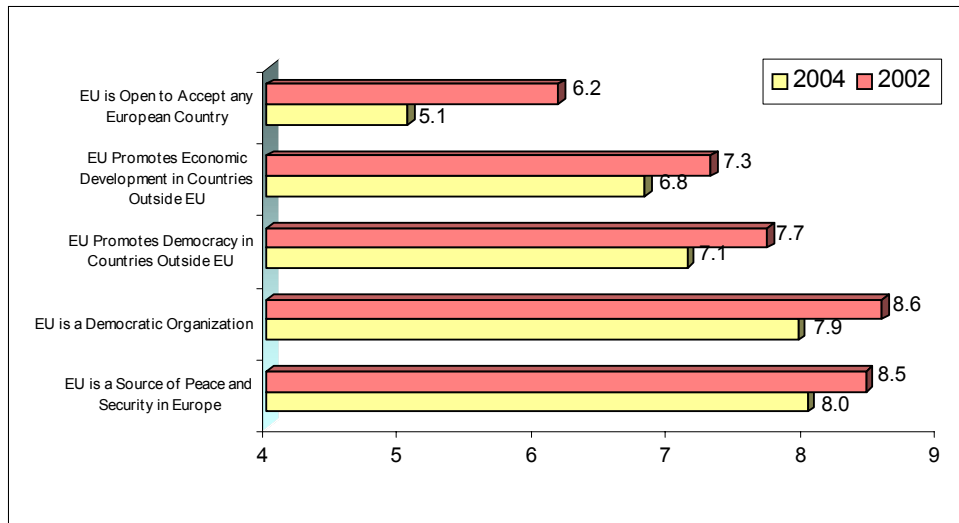


Figure 22. Perceptions on European Union (EU) for the General Sample

In both 2002 and 2004 EU scored more on the two first statements and slightly worse on the other three. So we have the same pattern repeated in 2004 although with lower scores in all five aspects. However it is important to emphasize that respondents still hold EU in high regard as an organization, but, as it is to be expected, they would like to see more action on part of EU outside its borders.

The answers of the general sample were also reflected in each of the categories. In all categories EU scored highest on the first two statements and rather lower on the other three. It is important to notice that EU scored the highest in the Media and NGO category, a total of 41.22 and 36.63. EU received the lowest scores in the Business category- 28.31. See Figure 23.

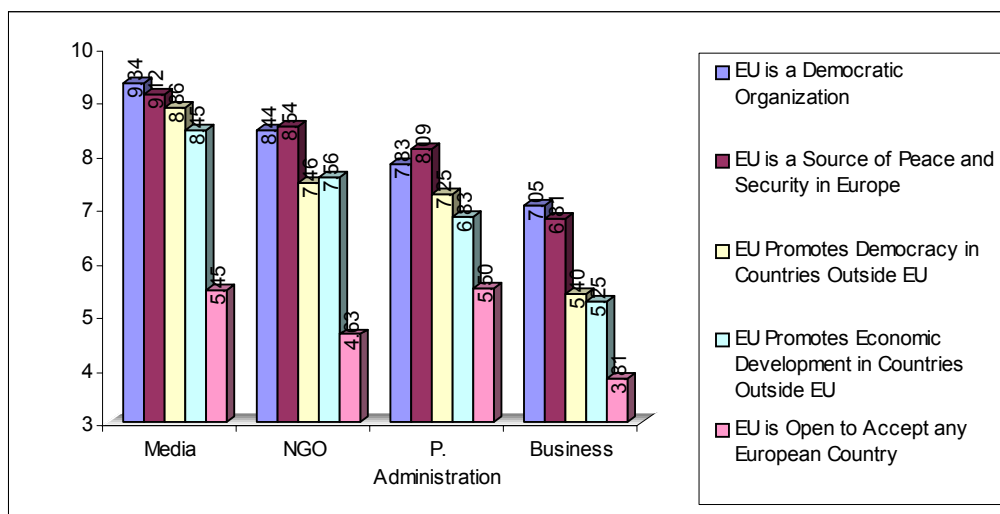


Figure 23. Perceptions on EU according to categories - 2004

The above data reflect the perceptions of the respondents on EU as an organization and its impact on third countries. In order to assess both the perceptions and the level of knowledge of respondents on EU priorities and goals the respondents were given four goals and asked to evaluate them according to the importance that EU places on each.

Question: European Union was founded in order to attain a variety of goals. In your opinion how important are the following goals for the European Union? Please rate in a scale from 1 to 10 bearing in mind that the higher the number the more important you consider the given goal for EU.

GOALS	Mean	Standard Deviation
Economic Development of Member States	8.99	1.54
Democracy in Member States	8.89	1.59
The Defense of Europe	8.21	2.33
European Enlargement	7.06	2.49

Table 4. EU Goals for the General Sample – 2004

As it is to be expected EU scored lowest in enlargement, which again might reflect respondent's frustration with Albania's failure in the integration process so far. The two most important goals for EU were perceived economic development and democratization of member states. A comparison of the 2002 perceptions with the 2004 ones shows that there is almost no change in perceptions regarding EU's goals of economic development and democracy of member states. It is interesting to notice that respondents perceive EU enlargement as less of a priority for EU in 2004 as compared to 2002. Once again this might reflect the frustration with the Albanian experience. See Figure 24.

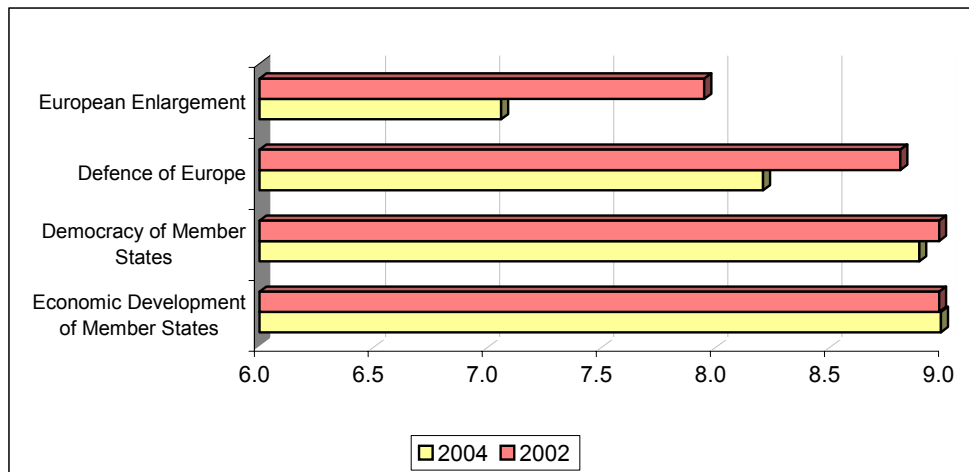


Figure 24. EU Goals – 2004 vs. 2002 General Sample

As the above figure demonstrates, respondents perceived economic development and democracy as almost equally important for the EU. There is also a rise in the score of Defense of Europe as an EU goal, which besides the unfamiliarity of respondents with EU as an organization might also be indicative of the growing rhetoric on the war against terrorism. Another plausible explanation could be due to

the fact that EU was founded after two world wars with the clear aim that in the longer run it should prevent the repetition of armed conflict in Europe.

The same pattern was present across all four categories where economic Development and Democracy of Member States came as the two main priorities for EU in all the surveyed categories. See Figure 25.

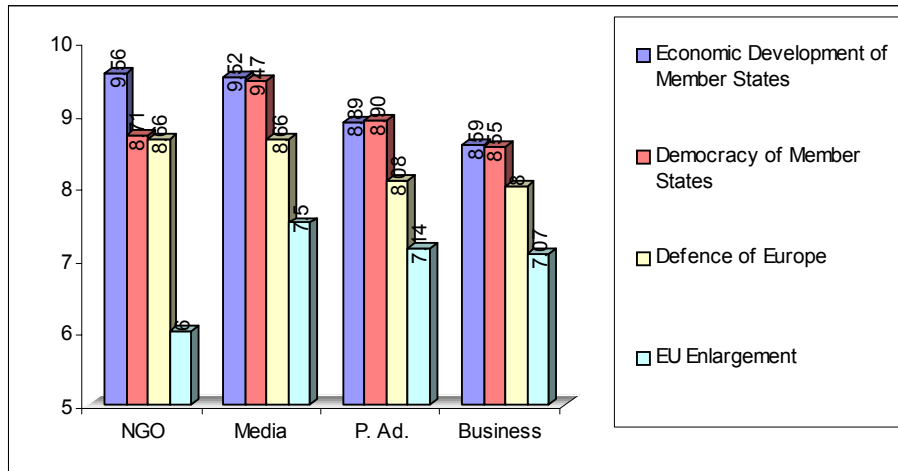


Figure 25. EU Goals According to Categories – 2004

It is interesting to notice from the above figure that EU scores the highest with the Media and NGO sector, and the lowest with the Business and the Public Administration sectors.

III.5 Sources of Information on EU

In order to achieve more insight regarding the level of information and knowledge of respondents, we tried to identify the sources of information from where respondents receive information on EU and whether they are interested in acquiring more knowledge on the subject. The two most important sources of information on EU for the general sample in 2004 were Television and Newspapers that scored 7.87 and 6.88 respectively. Internet was also an important source and it came third at 6.45. See Figure 26.

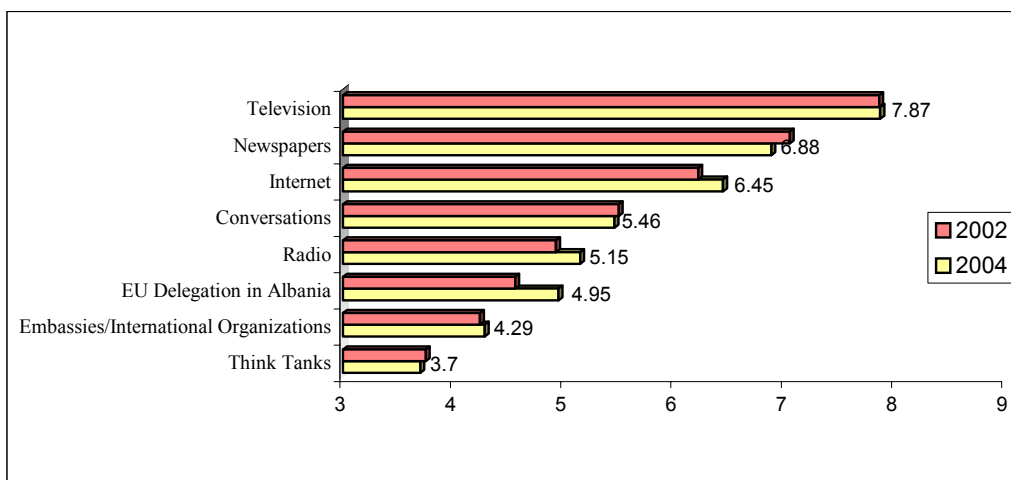


Figure 26. Sources of Information on European Union (EU) – 2004 - 2002 General Sample

It is interesting to notice that in comparison with 2002 the same pattern appears in 2004. There are some minor changes with the Internet, EU Delegation in Albania and the Radio becoming gaining some slight importance as sources of information on EU. Two factors might account for this. First the increasing presence of EU institutions and decentralizations on Albania, and second, technological advancement as indicated by the increasing importance of Internet. This is of particular interest since it is a source of information that can be more extensively used in the future.

The pattern of the general sample was also reflected in each of the categories. In all of them but the NGO one, Television was the main source of information with newspapers coming second, except for the Public Administration, where Internet was the second most important source of information. Internet was the main source of information for NGOs, while it scored third in the Business and Media category. It is important to mention that television and newspapers scored relatively high 6.5 or above, which means that the respondents have been exposed to information on EU to a considerable extent. See Figure 27 below.

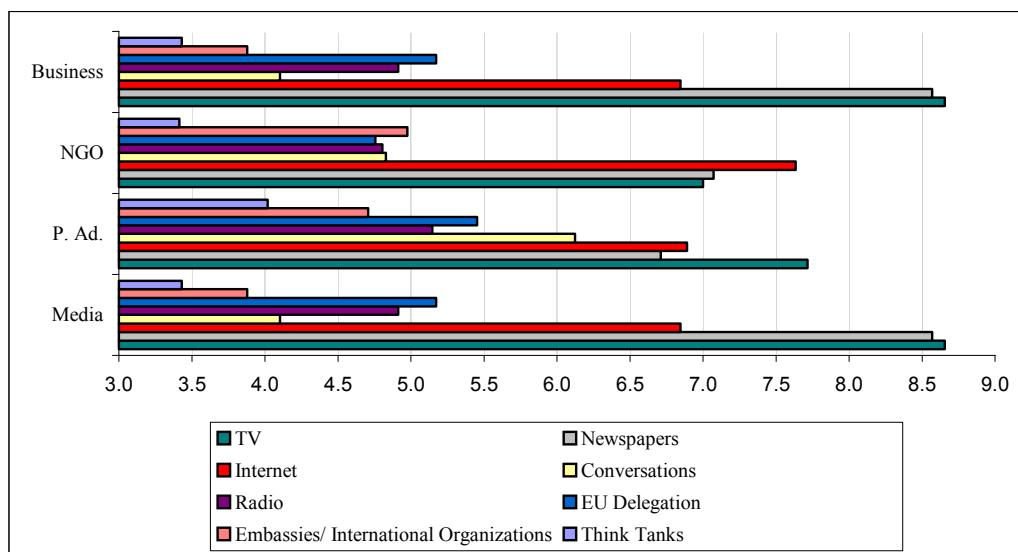


Figure 27. Sources of Information on European Union (EU) – 2004 Categories

Answers in the Media Category are very interesting – respondents here indicated TV and newspapers as the main sources of information, scoring respectively 8.7 and 8.6 out of 10, while Internet and the EC Delegation in Tirana were identified as the next two more important sources, with rather lower scores at respectively 6.8 and 5.2. The fact that this category itself does not receive enough primary information raises questions as to the validity and value of information made public. Media receives most information from media, thus by itself, creating a closed circle of transmission of information, on which the other categories build a significant part of their knowledge as well.

Such a phenomenon might have a deteriorating impact on the level and quality of knowledge on EU and EU integration process. Let us consider this question further, by exploring the respondents' knowledge on EU and its institutions. In order to achieve this objective, respondents were asked whether specific institutions/organizations were part of EU. Their responses to this question gave us a clearer picture on respondent's familiarity with EU and its institutions. See Table 5 and Figure 28 below.

Question: From what you know which of the following are Institutions of European Union (EU).

Institution	Yes	No	Don't Know
European Parliament	88.75	5.25	6
World Bank	9.25	82	8.75
European Commission	89.25	8	2.75
International Monetary Fund	9.25	79	11.75
NATO	13.25	79.5	7.25
European Bank of Investment	81	6.75	12.25
European Bank for Development and Reconstruction	80	10.75	9.25
Council of Europe	74	21	5
OSCE	66.75	25.5	7.75

Table 5. EU Institutions for the General Sample

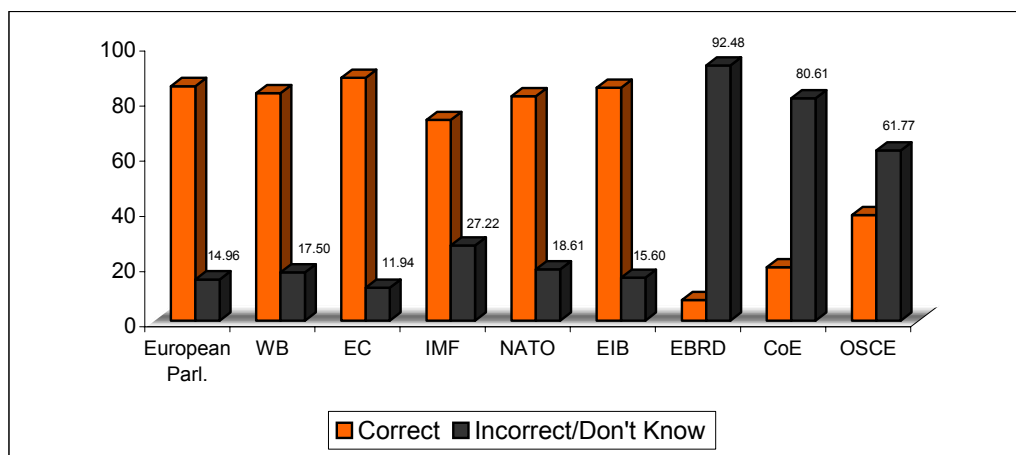


Figure 28. EU Institutions for the General Sample – 2004

As Figure 20 shows with the exception of OSCE, Council of Europe and EBRD, the majority of respondents answered correctly in the other cases. Nevertheless we should not rush into conclusions since these three organizations are very telling examples. For most respondents the word "Europe" or "European" in the name of the institution seems to have been the determining factor in deciding on whether it was an EU institution or not. This might also explain why most people answered incorrectly on OSCE and EBRD, and why they answered correctly on the World Bank, NATO, and IMF, none of which contains the word "Europe" or "European".

It is important to point out that in the case of OSCE the number of correct answers is only 26.5% (even less than in the 2002 survey – see Figure 31) despite its presence in Albania during the last five years, and the important role it has acquired recently in Albanian politics. One would have expected the respondents to be more familiar with this organization for this very reason, but maybe the frequent association of OCSE consultancy with the government's efforts to implement the SAA requirements (i.e. in the property and electoral reform field) may have led to the opposite conclusion. Moreover, the importance attached by respondents to the forthcoming elections for the progress of the SA Process and integration in general, may have further reinforced the conviction that OSCE is a EU institution.

However, overall in 2004 there is no significant improvement in the level of knowledge of EU Institutions. There is a slight deterioration regarding Council of Europe and OSCE, which might be attributed to the name and role of these organizations in Albania. See Figure 29.

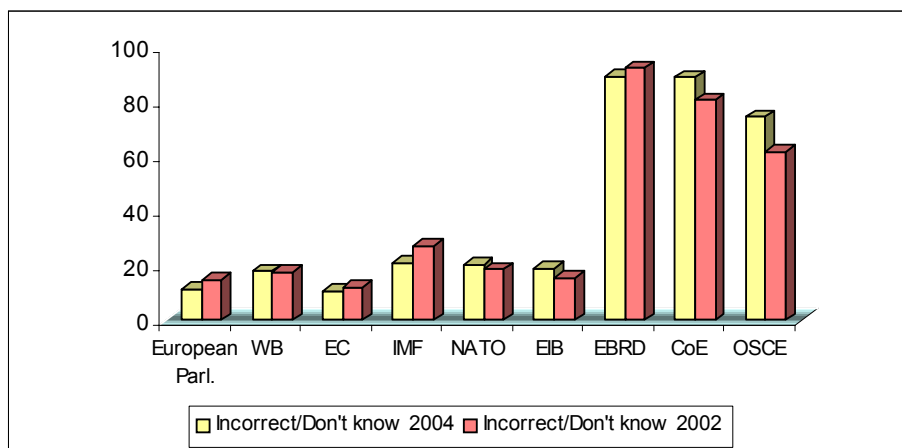


Figure 29. EU Institutions for the General Sample – Incorrect/Don't Know 2002 vs. 2004

The answers given in each category reflect well the answers of the general sample. Business is the least informed category, while it is surprisingly followed by the public administration in most cases. NGO is generally the most informed category. The conclusions drawn from the general sample seem also valid for the categories with very few exceptions, for example 50% of the media category think the European Parliament is not a EU institution. See Figure 30.

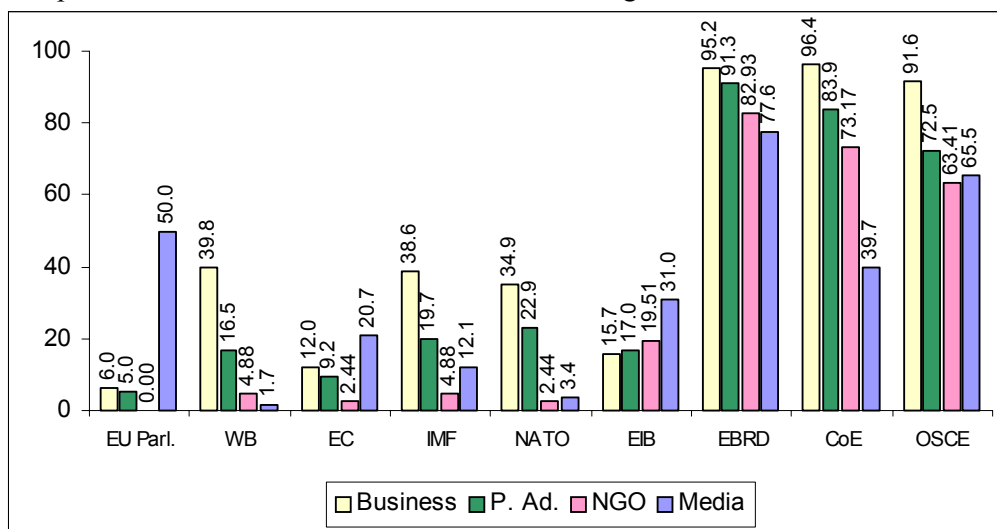


Figure 30. Incorrect/Don't know Answers for EU Institutions According to Each Category - 2004

In order to determine which category is better informed we could add the correct answers in each case and for each category. If we do this, we shall see that NGO scores highest at 646 percentage points, Media is second at 598 percentage points, Public Administration third at 562 and Business last with 470 percentage points. It is important to emphasize that these numbers are percentage point, which means that the sample size is irrelevant in this case. Otherwise the Public Administration would have the largest number of correct answers by the sheer size of its sample.

Category	Answer	European Parl.	WB	EC	IMF	NATO	EIB	EBRD	CoE	OSCE	Total percentage points

P. Ad.	Correct	94.95	83.49	90.83	80.28	77.06	83.03	8.72	16.06	27.52	561.93
	Incorrect/D on't know	5.05	16.51	9.17	19.72	22.94	16.97	91.28	83.94	72.48	338.07
Business	Correct	93.98	60.24	87.95	61.45	65.06	84.34	4.82	3.61	8.43	469.88
	Incorrect/D on't know	6.02	39.76	12.05	38.55	34.94	15.66	95.18	96.39	91.57	430.12
NGO	Correct	100	95.12	97.56	95.12	97.56	80.49	17.07	26.83	36.59	646.34
	Incorrect/D on't know	0.00	4.88	2.44	4.88	2.44	19.51	82.93	73.17	63.41	253.66
Media	Correct	50	98.28	79.31	87.93	96.55	68.97	22.41	60.34	34.48	598.28
	Incorrect/D on't know	50.00	1.72	20.69	12.07	3.45	31.03	77.59	39.66	65.52	301.72

Table 6. EU Institutions According to Each Category

In order to assess the levels of knowledge and familiarity respondents have with the EU and the process of integration we tested their familiarity with the criterion/requirements that Albania has to fulfill in order to join EU.

Question. In order for Albania to join EU it has to meet certain criterion/conditions, have you heard of them?

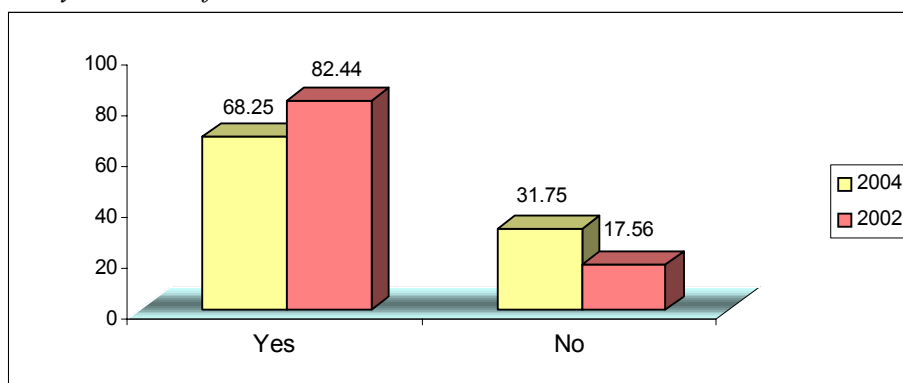


Figure 31. Familiarity with Conditions to Join EU - 2004 General Sample

As the above figure shows there is a significant change in 2004 as compared to 2002 regarding the level of familiarity with the EU Integration conditions? The level of familiarity of respondents with EU integration requirements in 2004 seems to be than in 2002. At first sight it seems rather puzzling that as EU integration becomes an ever more present reality, respondents seem to be less familiar with its requirements. In order to solve this apparent paradox we have to remember that here we are dealing with perceptions and not the actual levels of knowledge, which as the data shows has not changed very drastically from 2002 to 2004. The explanation lies with the fact that as there is more information about the technicalities and complications of the EU integration process, respondents might feel less confident in their level of knowledge, which could in turn explain why a higher percentage respond that they are not familiar with the conditions for EU membership.

In the same fashion as with the general sample there is a significant drop in the percentage of respondents who say that they have heard of the conditions needed to join EU. The answers according to categories showed that the most informed ones were again NGO and Media, whereas Business comes last. The fact that within the Public Administration a significant percentage was not familiar with the conditions to

join EU was a little surprising, since this group is directly involved in the country's integration efforts. See Figure 32.

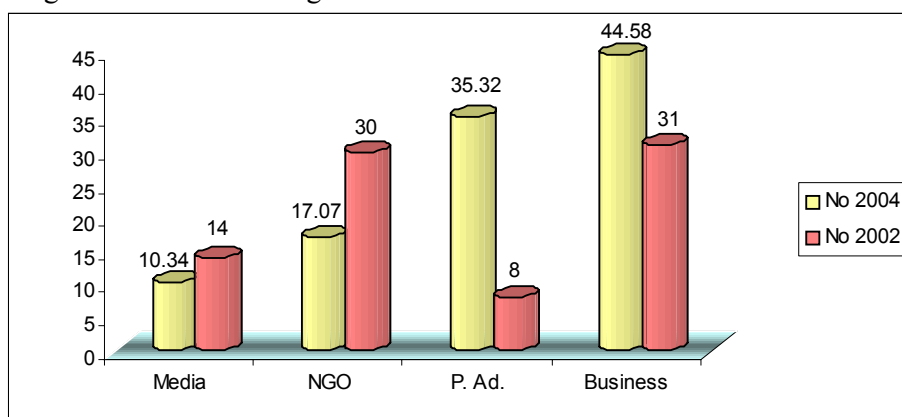


Figure 32. Familiarity with Conditions to Join EU across Categories – 2004 vs. 2002

Whereas in 2002 a solid majority of 82.44% said they knew conditions to join EU, and the Public Administration had the highest percentage of respondents familiar with accession criteria (92%), in 2004 the 'Yes' answers percentage has significantly decreased to 65%. Here again such occurrence, in a category that one would expect to be the most informed one in this regard, may be indicative of increased awareness on the complexity and wide range of criteria necessary for accession into the EU.

In order to test the actual level of information respondents had with regard to EU integration requirements, those who answered "Yes" to the previous question were also asked to rate some of the conditions they had heard of. See Figure 33.

Question. Please mention some of the conditions you have heard of:

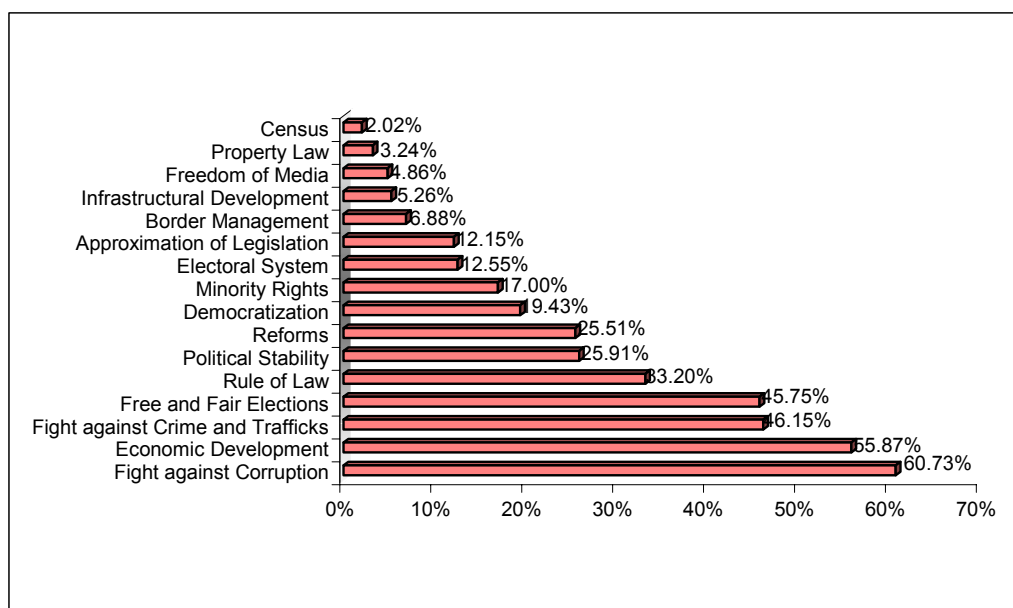


Figure 33. Conditions for Albania to Join EU – General Sample

As the above figure indicates, of the numerous conditions that were mentioned, the Fight Against Corruption, Economic Development, Fight against Trafficking and Organized Crime, Free and Fair Elections, Rule of Law, were rated in

the given order. As it can be seen, with few exceptions the conditions are very general. However, it is interesting to notice that in 2004 there is more advanced understanding of conditions than in 2002. In 2004 some additional, more specific, requirements such as Border Control and Property rights have been added. The fact that the actual level of knowledge of respondents on integration conditions has gone up, while the their perception on the knowledge they have has gone down, proves our earlier hypothesis that respondents are increasingly aware of the complexity of the process.

Public Administration and Media were the categories with the highest level of information on conditionalities. In both specific conditions were mentioned more frequently. See Figure 34.

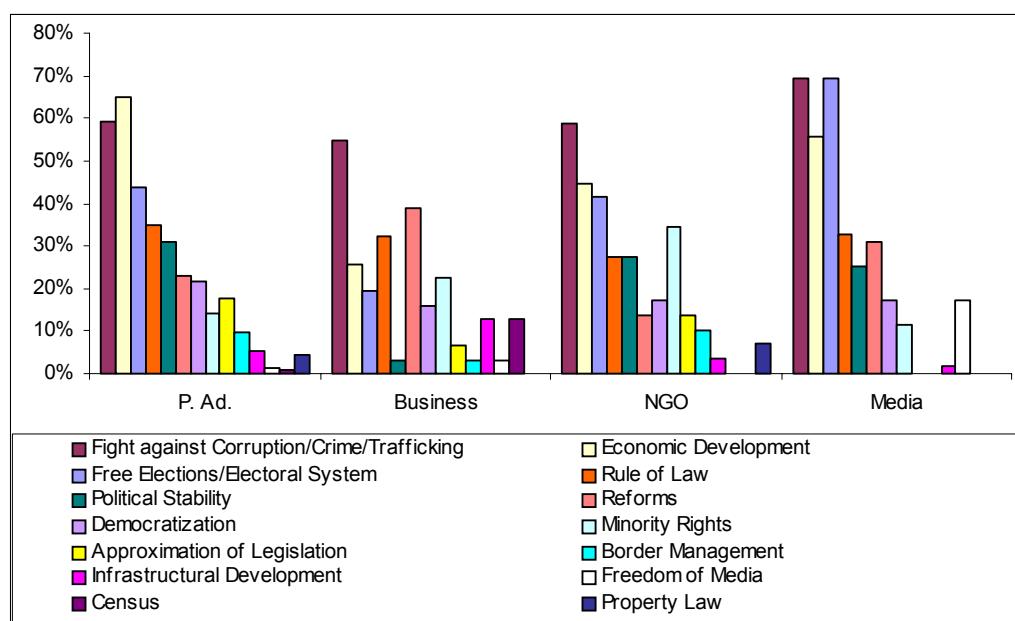


Figure 34. Conditions for Albania to join EU – Across Categories 2004

As Figure 34 indicates, Public Administration was the only category that considered Economic Development as the most important criteria to be met in order to join EU. Fight against Corruption and Crimes came only second, while it ranked first in all other categories. This is probably a result of the position of the Public Administration in the integration process. The elections issue was regarded as very important especially in the Media category, with a substantial majority of respondents indicating elections as a relevant condition. This shows an increasing familiarity of respondents with the EU integration process.

This was also clearly reflected when respondents were asked whether Albania will join first NATO or EU. In 2004 the number of people who said that Albania will first join NATO and later EU was much higher than in 2002. In fact in 2004 only 9 % of respondents answered that Albania will first join EU. See Figure 35.

Question. Albania is trying to become a member of EU as well as NATO. In your opinion which of them will Albania join first NATO or EU?

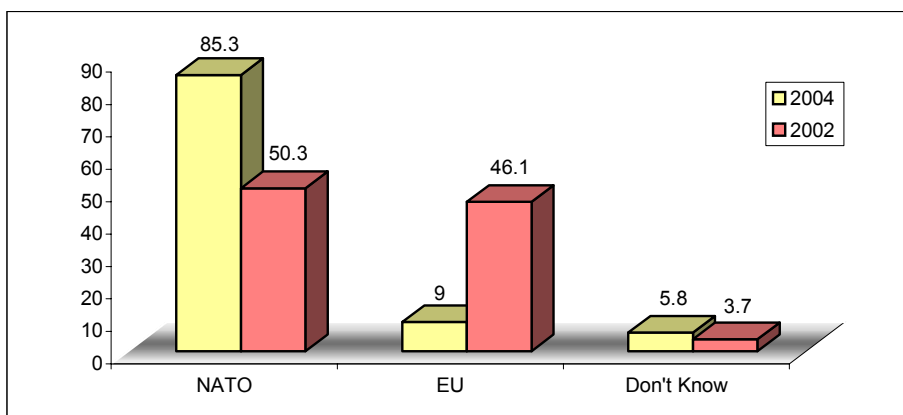


Figure 35. Albania's Membership in NATO and EU for the General Sample 2004

The above answers clearly indicate a more comprehensive understanding of the EU integration process. The fact that in 2002 only a slim majority of 50.28 percent answered that Albania would first join NATO may be meaningful in terms of the information our respondents receive. Whereas we cannot say for sure which organization will the country join first (or whether it will join), an empirical consideration would indicate that the prospect of joining NATO before the EU is more probable, both because that has generally been the pattern experienced in other Eastern European countries, and also due to the fact that criteria to join NATO are less exigent than those to join EU. Part of the explanation for such a significant change in percentages lies also with the fact that EU integration process has almost stopped during 2004, while more progress has been made with regard to NATO membership.

Answers in the general sample reflect those received in each of the categories. In all the categories the majority of respondents answered that Albania will first join NATO and then EU. See Figure 36.

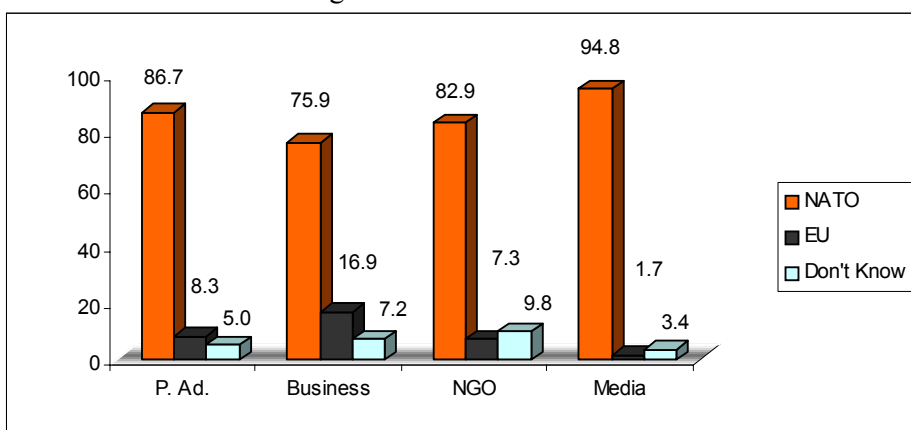


Figure 36. Albania's Prospects for Membership in NATO and EU According to Categories – 2004

Differences with the 2002 patterns are obvious: in 2002 in the Public Administration and Local NGOs the majorities of respondents that marked NATO were less significant at 56.88% and 47.50% respectively, while in the business category there was a substantial majority of 72.16% which answered that Albania will join EU first and later on NATO. See Figure 37.

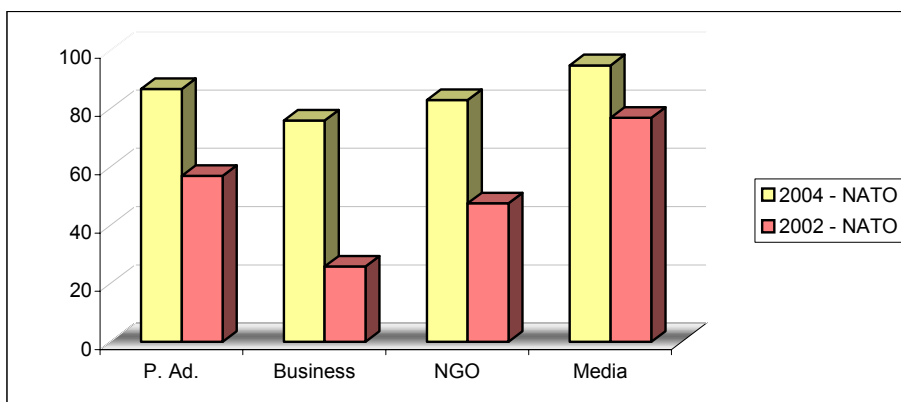


Figure 37. Albania's Prospects for Membership in NATO and EU -Categories 2002 vs. 2004

As the above data shows, the level of information of respondents on EU and the integration process were satisfactory and improving from 2002 to 2004, although some misconceptions were still present. In addition it is important to emphasize that a considerable majority of respondents, 82%, were interested to receive more information on EU. See Figure 38.

Question. Are you interested to receive more information on EU?

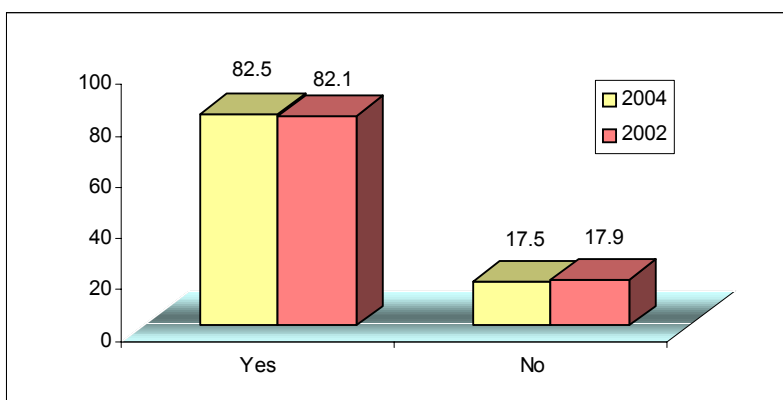


Figure 38. Level of Interest on EU Information – 2004 vs. 2002 General Sample

It is interesting to notice that the level of interest for EU and the EU integration process has remained virtually unchanged from 2002 to 2004 in the general sample. However there were major differences across categories, despite the overall high interest levels. The most interested category was the NGO one, followed by the Public Administration and Business. The least interested category was the Media. See Figure 39.

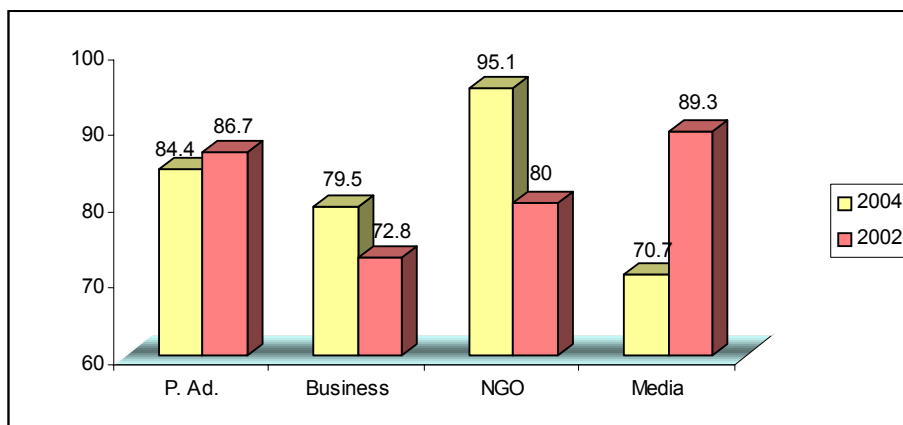


Figure 39. Level of Interest on EU Information – 2004 vs. 2002 - Categories

In both the NGO and Business categories there has been an increasing interest on EU from 2002 to 2004. In the Media category on the other hand there has been a significant drop, with almost 20 % less respondents interested to receive information on EU and EU integration processes. Given the impact of the media on the information – as well as perceptions of the population, this is not a very positive development. Furthermore it might also be an indicator of the overwhelming presence of EU and EU integration in the Albanian media and political and social agenda. Such dropping interest level cannot be interpreted as dropping support for EU since the Media category had the highest support levels for Albania's EU membership. It might be above all saturation with the ubiquitousness of the EU integration process, in the domestic political rhetoric, in the stance of international institutions and so on.

Those interested to receive more information on EU were also asked in what areas they would like to receive more information. As the figure below shows the area in which respondents were more interested was EU enlargement. The score of EU Enlargement, 8.98 out of 10, is very indicative of the great interest respondents have on such a process. Such an interest does not come as a surprise given the high levels of support for Albania's EU membership, the expectations from Albania's EU membership and the general desire for the process to move faster. See Figure 40.

Question. The information on EU covers different areas. How interested would you be to receive information on the areas shown below? Please evaluate in a 1 to 10 scale, bearing in mind that the higher the number, the more interested would you be to receive information on the given area.

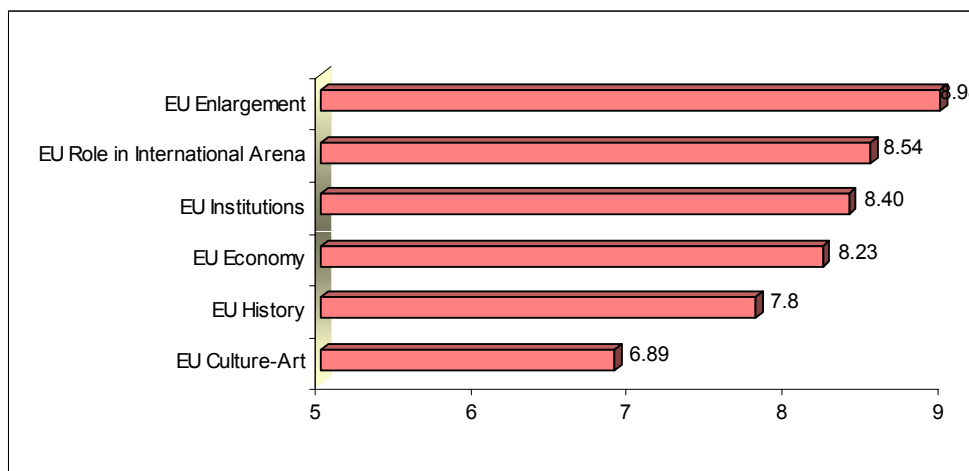


Figure 40. Level of Interest on EU According to Area – 2004 General Sample

III.6 Analyses

The survey was designed and based on the assumption that there is a correlation between the educational background of the respondents and their level of knowledge on EU as an organization and the process of EU integration for Albania in general. According to our assumption the higher the level of education the better informed the respondents in both areas. This assumption defined our sampling techniques and is important in drawing conclusions for populations beyond the one covered by our sample. We tested this assumption in two areas; the level of knowledge of respondents on EU and its institutions, and knowledge on the process of Albania's integration into EU. For this reason we combined the answers of questions that tested such knowledge with the educational background of the respondents in each case.

EU And Its Institutions

Below there is the graph of the correct answers in question 6 against the educational level of the respondents in each case. The numbers in the graph show the correct answers for each educational category as a percentage of the total answers for the given category. See Figure 41.

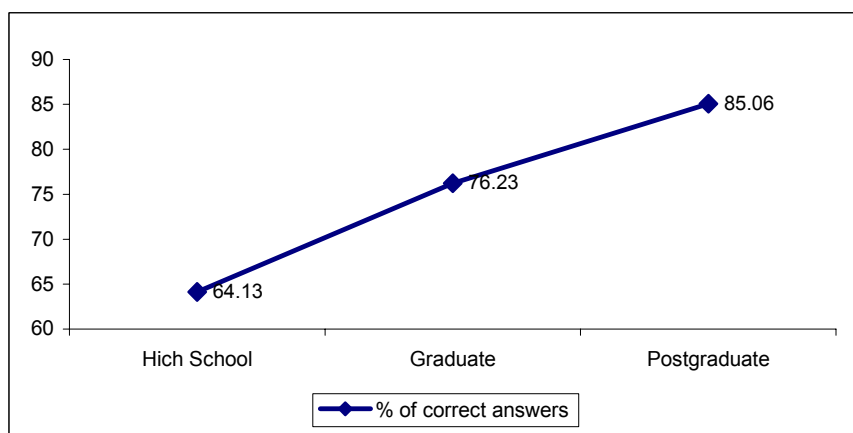


Figure 41. Educational Background vs. Knowledge of Albania's Membership into International Organizations (Question 6)

The same correlation was also identified when combining the educational background of respondents with their knowledge of EU institutions. See Figure 42.

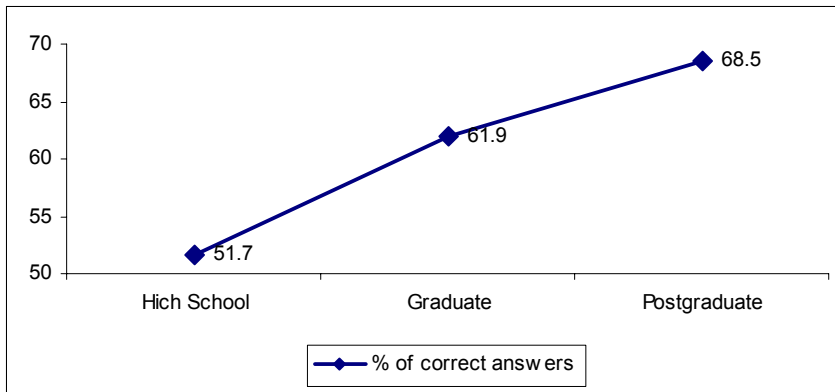


Figure 42. Educational Background vs. Knowledge of EU Institutions

The Process of EU Integration

The above figures show that there exists a correlation between educational background and knowledge on EU and its institutions. Now we have to determine whether such a correlation exists also for the process of Albania's integration into EU. Thus, the question is: Are people with higher educational level more informed on this process? Such a correlation might not be as obvious as it seems, since once people begin to specialize (i.e. complete higher education or post graduate studies) they have less time and predisposition to become informed on issues outside of their area of expertise.

This relation is evident with regard to the familiarity of the respondents with the conditions for Albania to join EU. Thus, when asked in Question 16 whether they had heard of these conditions the higher the educational background the higher the percentages of those who responded, "Yes". See Figure 43.

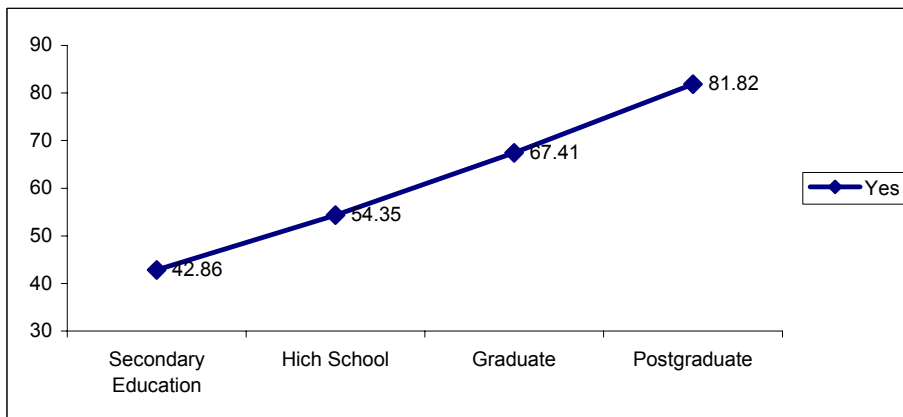


Figure 43. Educational Background vs. Familiarity with Albania's Conditions to Join EU

Perceptions and Expectations on the Speed of the EU Integration Process

When asked about the speed of the process of Albania's integration into EU most of the respondents answered that the process was moving either slowly or very slowly. When they were asked to assess the number of years that it will take Albania to join EU, the majority of respondents marked 5 and 10 years. In order to understand what respondents meant by qualitative adjectives such as "fast", "slow" or "very slow" and quantify them in terms of years we combined questions 18 and 19. First we combined the responses of those who thought that the process of integration was taking place fast with their responses to question 19 where they were asked about the number of years that it would take Albania to join EU. See Figure 44.

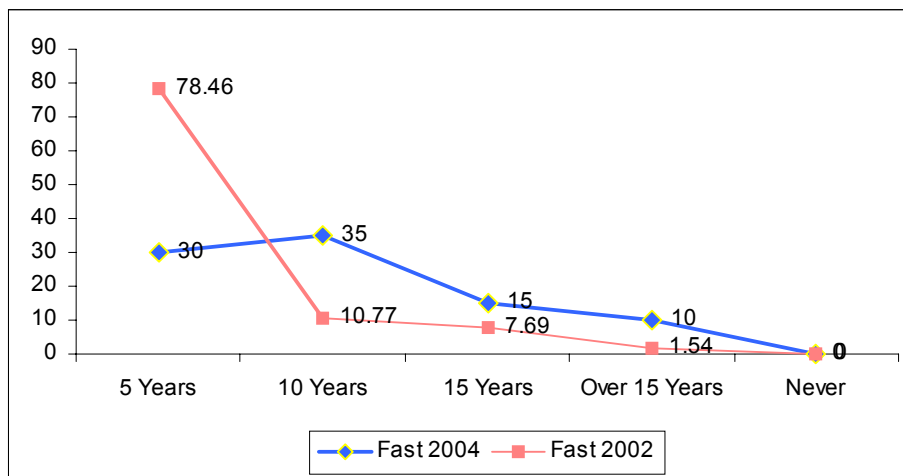


Figure 44. The speed of the integration process vs. the number of years Albania will need to integrate in EU – 2004 vs. 2002

Figure 44 shows that the perception of "fast" with regard to Albania's EU integration has shifted left, which means that the integration process is expected to last longer. The largest group of respondents, 35%, of those who thought that the integration process was moving fast thought that Albania will join EU in 10 years. Another considerable percentage of respondents, 30% thought this would happen in 5 years. Some 15% and 10% marked 15 and 'more than 15 years' respectively. Thus, the majority of respondents, 65 %, by "fast" meant a period of 5 to 10 years. Two years ago expectations in term of time seem to have been much more optimistic: the majority, 78.46%, by fast meant a period of 5 years. Thus, time expectations have become more pessimistic by about 5 to 10 years during this period.

In a similar fashion as above, we combined the answers of those who thought that the process was moving slowly with their responses to question 19 where they were asked about the number of years that it would take for Albania to join EU. See Figure 45.

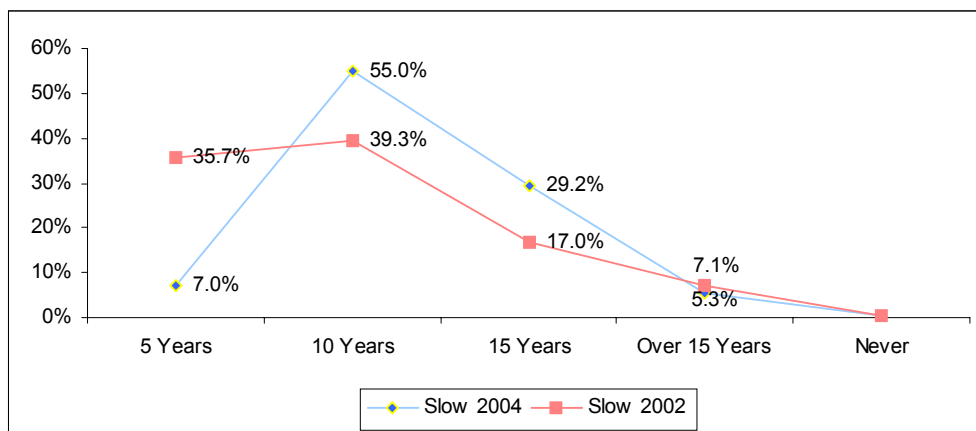


Figure 45. The answers “slow” in terms of years - 2004 vs. 2002

Here again we see a shift of the curve towards the left, i.e. towards more pessimism. Figure 36 shows that the majority of respondents, 55% who thought that the process of Albania’s EU integration was taking place slowly marked 10 years as the time that it will take Albania to join EU. Some 29% marked 15 years and a smaller percentage of 7.14 % marked more than 15 years. Therefore, by “slow” most respondents meant a period of time in the range of ten to fifteen years, whereas in 2002 ‘slow’ was rather associated with 5 to 10 years.

Finally, Figure 46 shows that the majority of those who thought that the process was moving very slowly marked somewhere between fifteen and more than fifteen years as the number of years that it will take Albania to join EU, with the highest percentage, 40%, on 15 years and 37% more than 15 years. However it is interesting to notice that some 5 % marked 5 years although they thought the process was moving very slowly, in the same fashion as another 7% marking 5 years although thinking the process was moving slowly. This might be indicative both of their desire for Albania to join EU as soon as possible and of a limited understanding of the length of the process. See Figure 46.

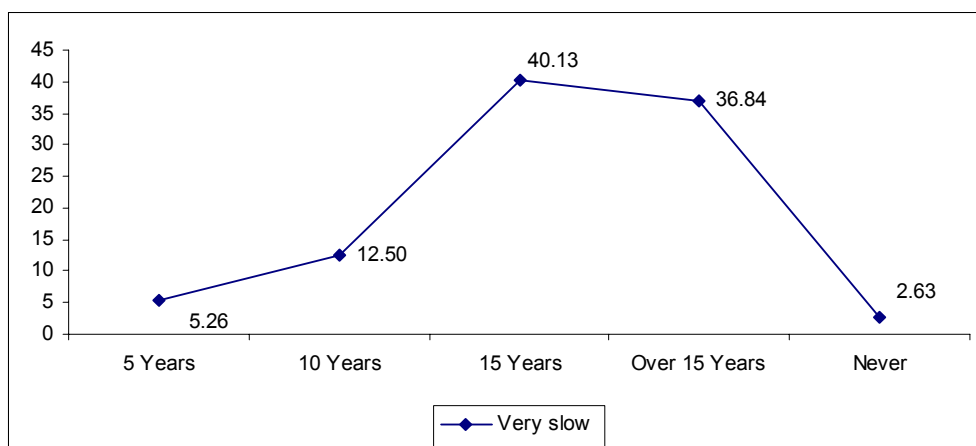


Figure 46. Answers ‘Very Slow’ in terms of Years – 2004

From the graphs above it can be concluded that the majority of those respondents that think the integration process is moving fast believe that Albania will join EU in five to ten years. Most of those who think that the process is taking place

slowly fall in the 10 to 15 years range, whereas the ones that believe the process is moving very slowly envisage a 15 or more years time period in which Albania will join EU, although most respondents would like the process to move faster. Taking into consideration that 2002 estimates were quite more optimistic in terms of years, we may say that the respondents' knowledge of the integration process has grown together with their pessimism.

In order to assess whether there is a correlation between more pessimistic expectations and growing EU skepticism we combined the answers of those who would vote against Albania's EU membership in the referendum, with the number of years thought necessary for the country's EU accession. See Figure 47.

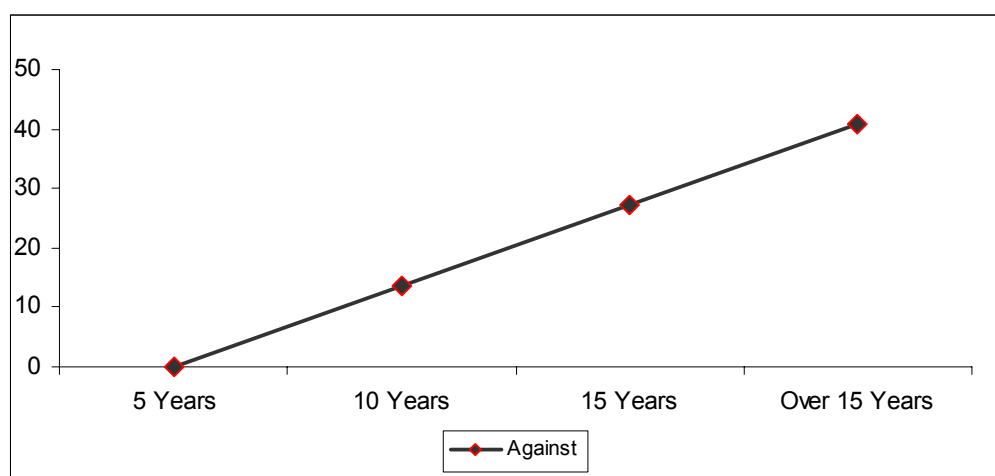


Figure 47. Pessimism and EU Support - Against EU membership versus Expectations in terms of years

As the above figure clearly shows there is a very strong correlation between the level of pessimism and the level of support for Albania's EU membership; the more pessimistic respondents are about the time it will take Albania to join EU the higher the chances that they will vote against Albania's EU membership if a referendum were held tomorrow. This also explains why there is a growing percentage of respondents that would not vote for Albania's EU membership if a referendum were held tomorrow.

Perceptions on European Union (EU)

It has been clearly shown in the Findings section that most respondents held the European Union in very high regard. They perceived it as a democratic organization that is also a source of peace and security in Europe as well as a promoter of economic and democratic developments in the member countries and beyond. The respondents also perceived EU as a very important partner for Albania and an overwhelming majority supported Albania's membership into EU.

While the above facts and perceptions are very obvious it is important to determine whether there is a correlation between the level of enthusiasm/optimism of the respondents and the way in which they perceive EU. It might be the case that the more hopeful the respondents towards Albania's EU integration the more positive their assessment of EU and its importance for the country. In order to see whether

such a relation exists we combined the answers to questions 18 and 19 with those given to questions that aim to assess the perceptions of EU and its importance by the respondents. Questions 18 and 19 were used to define respondents as optimistic or not in relations to Albania's integration into EU.

As Figure 48 below indicates “the optimists”, i.e., those that thought Albania will join EU in a period of 5 to 15 years gave on average higher marks to EU than the “pessimists”, i.e., those who thought Albania will join EU at a later time, in more than 15 years. In order to compare the results the mean of the total marks that EU received in specific areas in question 8 was calculated and graphed against the answers in question 19.

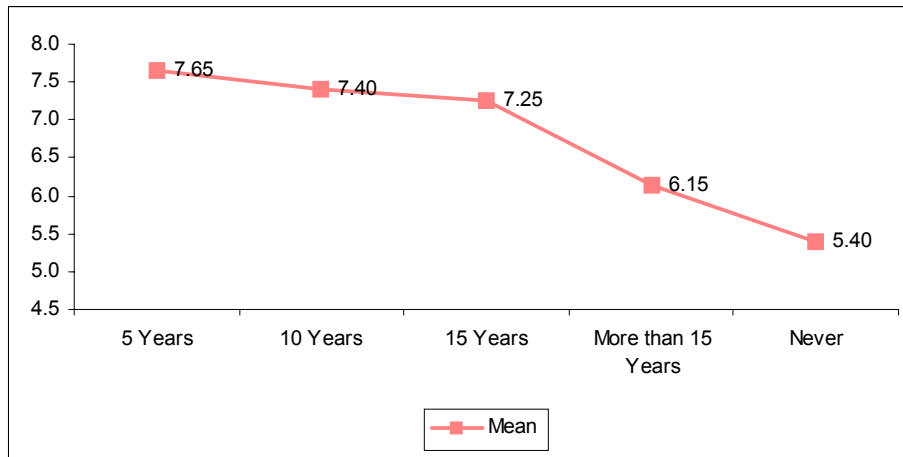


Figure 48. EU Perceptions in Relation to Membership Expectations – Question 19 vs. Question 8 – 2004

The graph above shows that the more optimistic respondents towards Albania's EU integration had a more positive perception of EU as an organization and its role in relation to other European countries. Therefore, the fact that EU has scored less in 2004 as compared to 2002 can be partly explained by the increasing pessimism and frustration with Albania's integrations process.

In a similar fashion those who are more optimistic regarding the speed of the EU integration process for Albania seem also to have higher expectations from Albania's membership into EU. This conclusion can be drawn if we combine perceptions on EU membership benefits with expectations in terms of years; the correlation that exists between pessimism for the pace of integration and skepticism about potential benefits is quite strong. See Figure 49.

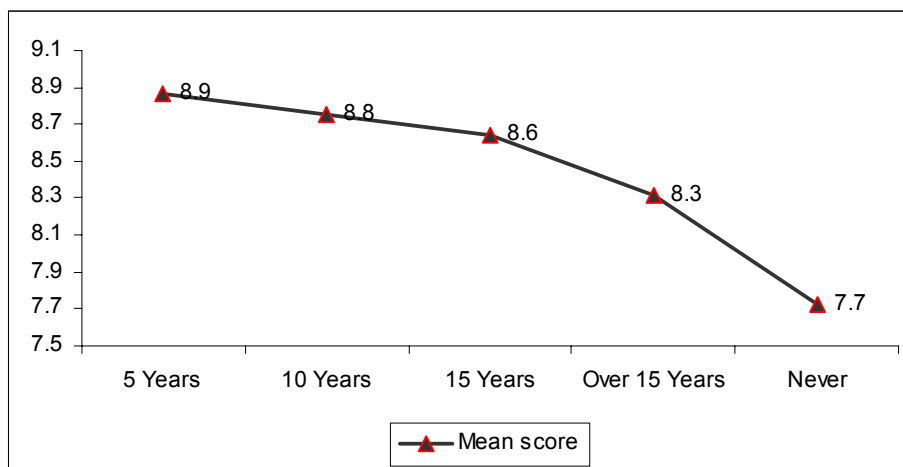


Figure 49. Expectations in terms of years vs. Perceptions on EU Membership Benefits (Question 19 vs. Question 20)

The above figure shows that the longer the time that respondents think it will take Albania to join EU the less benefits they see from EU membership. Such correlations are important to emphasize since they show that perceptions on EU and expectations from EU membership are related to respondent's perceptions on the length of the membership process. The more optimistic they are on Albania's chances to join EU the more positive their perceptions on EU and the higher their expectations from the membership.

Therefore, the longer the respondents think it will take Albania to join EU the lower will be their support for EU membership and their perception of the benefits to be derived from the integration process, while perceptions of EU deteriorate will also deteriorate. The implications here are manifold, both for Albania and for EU's stand towards the country. However, the most important point to bear in mind is that unless Albania's integration process returns back on track and unless membership prospects for Albania become more tangible and less distant in time, support for EU membership will continue to drop along with expected benefits from EU membership. This might start a vicious circle in which as support for EU membership drops, the integration process slows down, which in turn will decelerates the integration process even further.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study is a follow up to a similar project that the Albanian Institute for International Studies carried out during September 2002. The goal of this study was to assess the level of knowledge and perceptions on EU and Albania's integration into EU in the public administration, media, local NGOs and businesses. AIIS decided to make use of the same questionnaire¹¹ in a sample composed of the same categories, in order to explore the dynamic of change on the level of knowledge and perceptions on the integration process. It is important to point out that this new research is carried out almost two years following the official opening of the negotiations for the Stabilization Association Agreement¹². During this time EU and Albania's integrations process has been in the focus of political and social discourse, from political parties to the media. Two other important events have drawn enhanced attention on this process: the Thessaloniki Summit, which for the first time offered to Western Balkans countries a more tangible European perspective; and the EU enlargement with ten new members on May 1st, 2004. In order to achieve the above-mentioned goal the following objectives were set:

- Assess the dynamic of change within categories in terms of perceptions, expectations, and information.
- Assess the familiarity of the chosen categories with international organizations in general and EU in particular.
- Assess perceptions and attitudes towards EU.
- Evaluate the familiarity and perceptions of the chosen groups with the process of integration into EU for Albania.
- Identify the main sources of information on EU for the chosen categories.

IV.1 Survey Design

The survey was based on the same questionnaire that was used in the 2002 survey. However, the questionnaire contains partial changes, which do not affect its essence and comparability. Some questions were added relating to perceptions on relations with neighbors in the context of regional integration and the signing of FTAs, as well as questions relating to the negotiations for the SAA and its benefits, in order to explore issues that have arisen during these two years. The questionnaire was prepared by the survey team of the Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS). As in 2002, the questionnaire contained four main sections: General Information on the Interviewee, General Information on EU, The Process of EU Integration, and Sources of Information. Final revisions and organizations of the questions resulted in an 8 page, 27 questions and 76 variables questionnaire. In order to achieve accurate as well as unbiased responses the questionnaire contained both closed ended and open-ended questions (SEE Annex 1).

¹¹ With a few partial changes, which do not affect the essence of the questionnaire and its comparability. Some questions were added relating to perceptions on relations with neighbors in the context of regional integration and the signing of FTAs, as well as questions relating to the negotiations for the SAA and its benefits.

¹² On 31 January 2003.

IV.2 Sampling Procedures and Fieldwork

In order to preserve the continuity of the project, as well as the possibility to draw comparisons, the same sample as for the 2002 survey was chosen. However, the new sample is slightly different from the 2002 one, since some people had moved from their positions. The same categories were surveyed in 2004 as in 2002:

- Public Administration
- Media
- Local NGOs
- Local Businesses

The fieldwork for the survey was completed during the month of October. The above categories were chosen for mainly two reasons. First, they provide an audience whose knowledge on EU is above that of the average citizen, which allows for more qualified answers. This gave us more room to explore the level of knowledge and perceptions on EU and EU integration for Albania. Secondly, these categories and especially Public Administration are both immediately responsible for and directly affected by Albania's EU integration process. Furthermore, categories such as the Media, but also local NGOs and government agencies, are sources of information on EU and Albania's EU integration. Therefore, their answers were of greater interest than those of the average man in the street even if only for the mere fact that these categories to a large extent shape the knowledge and perceptions of the public at large. Moreover, the 2002 survey revealed serious misunderstanding even within these categories, and it was interesting to review the dynamic of change within two years, given the large-scale attention devoted to integration issues both in the political and social discourse.

The absence of accurate statistics prevented a rigorous random probability sample throughout the chosen categories. Stratified sampling was used in two of the categories, Public Administration and Media in order to have a representative sample and data that could be analyzed according to each of the specific categories. In both cases randomization techniques were built into the sampling in order to increase the representativeness of the sample. In the case of businesses and local NGOs purely random probability techniques were employed.

Public Administration

The first challenge we had to face when selecting a representative sample for the public administration in Tirana was the very definition of the public administration. First, we had to decide on the institutions that were to be listed and then on their employees. The institutions we decided upon were all the government departments, the Premier's Office, the Parliament, the Presidency and the Central Elections Committee. Local government institutions, such as the municipality, were not included in the Public Administration category partly because of their specific nature and partly due to methodological considerations. Within each of the enlisted institutions the people that were interviewed were only those that enjoyed the civil servant status.

Initially, a list of all of the above-mentioned institutions and their civil servant personnel was computed. The data was taken from the Department of Public Administration (DPA) near the Premier's office. Then a sample of 200 respondents was selected with a weighted number of respondents in each institution proportional to its ratio of civil servants in relation to the total number of civil servants.

Media

A similar methodology was pursued in sampling the media. The media outlets that were chosen were: TV stations, daily newspapers and radio stations. A list of these outlets was compiled with the number of journalists working in each of them. In the case of media the respondent category consisted of journalists. Besides the number of journalists working at each media outlet, another consideration was also the audience of each outlet. The larger the audience the more the number of journalists interviewed. Due to the patchy information we had on the size of each outlet audience we did not use this factor as a primary consideration, which should have been the case under ideal conditions.

Businesses

In the case of the Business category the survey team compiled a list of some 1444 businesses either locally owned or with mixed ownership (Albanian & foreign ownership) located in Tirana or its immediate surroundings. Out of this list 100 businesses were randomly selected. This choice was dictated by the goal of our survey which was to assess Albanian perceptions only. The list of businesses was compiled using the data available at Tirana Chamber of Commerce. The list of enlisted businesses was not exhaustive, i.e. it did not include all the Tirana based businesses. However, the list was representative of medium and large Tirana based businesses. Our bias towards medium and large businesses was justified mainly on methodological grounds for two reasons. First, medium and large businesses have larger stakes in Albania's integration towards EU, which might entail greater interest on such a process. Secondly these businesses are easier to define since they avoid informal sector complications and other methodological obstacles in defining small-sized enterprises.

Within this sample, we interviewed only managerial staff or where possible the owner(s) of the business. This choice was in line with our goal to gather informed responses, or at least responses from those who had greater stakes in Albania's EU integration process. Since we did not possess prior data on the size of the business, or the number of employees it was decided that on each case the interviewer would ask for the size of the business or the number of employees and depending on this information perform more than one interview where appropriate. While this choice undermined the scientific accuracy of the sample it did ensure a more weighted sample of the businesses depending on their size.

Local NGOs

In the same fashion as with the Business sector in the case of Local NGOs a list of Tirana based Albanian NGOs was compiled and some forty NGOs were randomly selected from this list. Here again as in the case of the business category given the

absence of reliable information on the number of employees in each NGO it was decided that the larger the number of employees the greater the number of interviews that were performed. This principle was pursued rigorously in each individual case. Thus, even in this case we worked with a weighted sample. Those interviewed were the employees excluding supporting staff, such as drivers or secretaries. The aim was always to increase the chances of informed responses.

IV.3 Limitations and Strengths of the Survey

First of all, it is important to emphasize that the survey conducted by AIIS is not a public survey in the traditional sense of the word. The results cannot be used to show the perceptions and the level of knowledge of the Albanian public at large. These results are valid only for the chosen categories on an individual bases. They do not reflect the perceptions or the level of knowledge of the average citizen, no matter how we define him/her. Moreover, the categories are so different from each other that any analyses that group their responses together should be very cautious in drawing far reaching conclusions. Thus, the first limitation of the survey pertains to the selection of the categories.

Having said this, it is also important to mention that the data, both on an individual and group basis, does reflect the perceptions and the level of knowledge of a population group that is, or should be, better informed than the average citizen. However, even in this case the data should be used very cautiously since some important categories that belong to this group such as politicians, university students or members of the academia have not been included.

Another limitation of the survey relates to sampling methodology and its implementation. Sampling was conducted in the absence of accurate information. In categories such as local NGOs or locally owned businesses we did not possess information on the number of the employees or the size of the business. In the case of the Media our information on the audience of the media outlet was patchy and often limited to only a restricted number of major TV stations or major newspapers.

Finally, one of the limitations of the survey relates to the Business category in particular. In this category a distinction between those businesses belonging to the services sector and the ones in the production sector would have been helpful since these sectors will be affected in very different ways by the integration process. Here again we did not apply the distinction due to methodological and logistic considerations, ranging from the very definition of the production sector in Albania to the scarcity of accurate information on size and number of employees. Nevertheless, such a shortcoming does not invalidate our findings even in this category since the questions do not particularly focus on the economic implications and prerequisites of the integration process but rather on the level of knowledge of a process as a whole. In future surveys, focusing on this category would be necessary.

Besides the above-mentioned limitations the survey also had some major strengths. The questionnaire that was used, after consecutive rounds of testing, was designed to be simple, easy to use as well as informative. Thus, the interviews were designed to be short and conversational, lasting 10 minutes on average, which meant that in most

cases the responses were candid and well thought through. This was also made possible by the rating scale that we used, which was from 1 to 10, a scale that replicates the Albanian grading system so all respondents were familiar with it from their school years. During the interview phase, none of the respondents had difficulties in understanding the rating scale.

Qualitative questions were combined with quantitative ones in a complementary fashion. The respondents were asked for their opinion on a specific issue, for example the speed of EU integration for Albania, and then asked to quantify that opinion, in terms of years in the present example. This makes the interpretation of the data more accurate as qualitative answers can be now quantified.

The two categories that were most rigorously surveyed were the public administration and media. In both cases, the sample was very representative and carefully selected. In both categories the respondents were quite collaborative. This made the implementation of the survey easier. Furthermore, these two categories were surveyed within a very short period of time, 3 days, so that the influence of external factors was minimized. In all cases the sample size was large enough to allow statistical analyses for the given category.

IV.4 Sample Description

General Sample

Males and females were almost equally represented in the general sample, with females being a slightly larger percentage. What is most important the male vs. female ratios in the 2004 sample are almost the same as in the 2002 one.

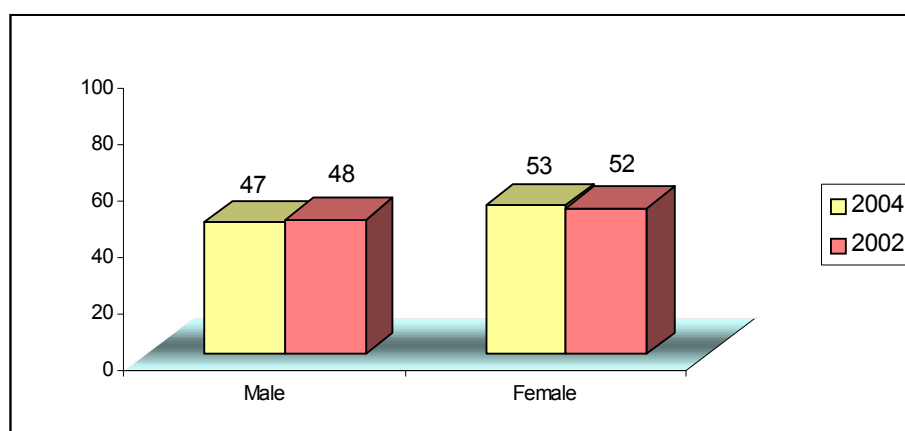


Figure 50. Gender Representation in Total 2004 vs. 2002

In the same fashion ratios were quite well preserved from the 2002 sample to the 2004 one, although there was some variations across categories. In all categories males and females were more or less equally represented, although there was a slight preponderance of female respondents. The majority of respondents in the Business and NGO category were male; in the other categories the majority of the respondents were females. This happened mainly due to the fact that, generally speaking the female population was far more cooperative than the male one. See Figure 51.

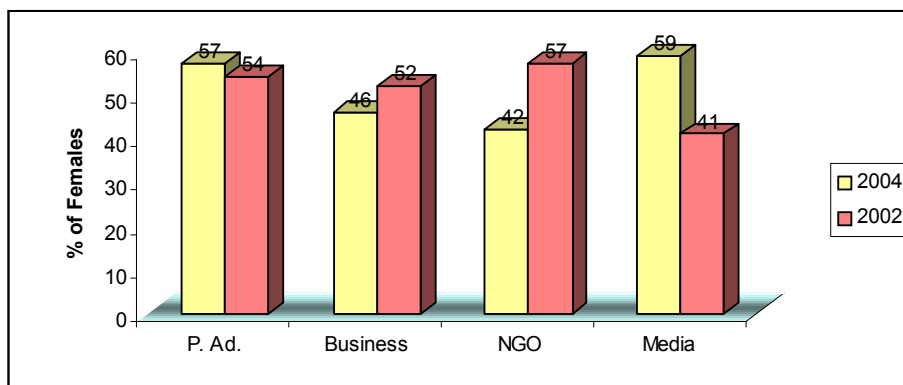


Figure 51. Gender Representation Across Categories

In line with our objective to receive qualified answers most of the respondents had a university degree, and a considerable portion had also been to graduate school. See Figure 52 and Table 7.

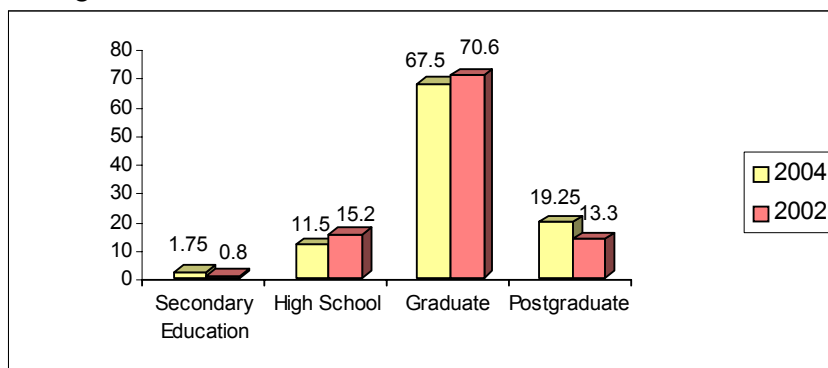


Figure 52. Educational Background of the Respondents

	P. Ad.	Business	NGO	Media
Secondary Education	0.9%	6.0%	0.0%	0.0%
High School	0.9%	50.6%	4.9%	0.0%
Graduate	71.6%	41.0%	58.5%	96.6%
Postgraduate	26.6%	2.4%	36.6%	3.4%

Table 7. Educational Background of the Respondents – Categories 2004

The majority of the respondents, 54.8% were young, falling in the 23 to 35 age group. The next biggest age group was 36-55 years old, with 33.5 % of the respondents. Only 7.8 % were above 55 years old, and only 4 % were in the 18-22 age group. The preponderance of the young age group is reflective of the fact that Albania has a very young population. See Figure 53.

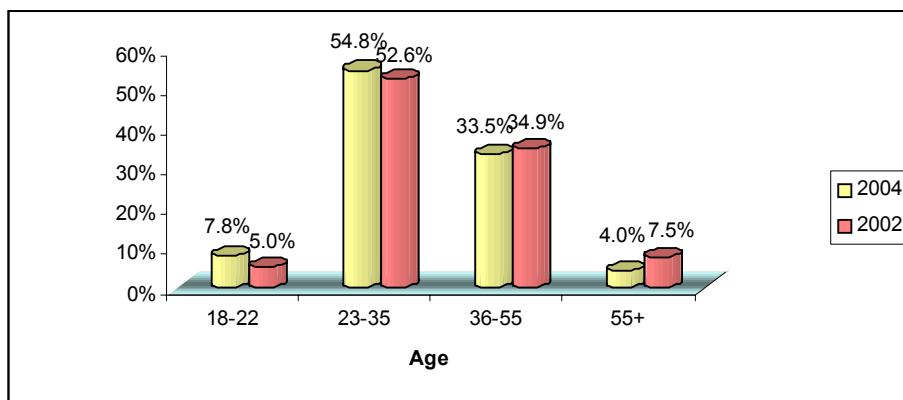


Figure 53. Age Distribution of the Respondents

The Public Administration category had the greatest percentage of respondents in the sample, 54.5 %. Although this category did not contain the largest population it contained a larger number of respondents due to the stratified sampling methodology applied to it. Therefore, the business category, which has a much larger population, had a smaller sample, 20.75% of the total, since in this case we applied random sampling. The other two categories, local NGOs and Media comprised 10.25% and 14.5 % of the total sample respectively. See Figure 54.

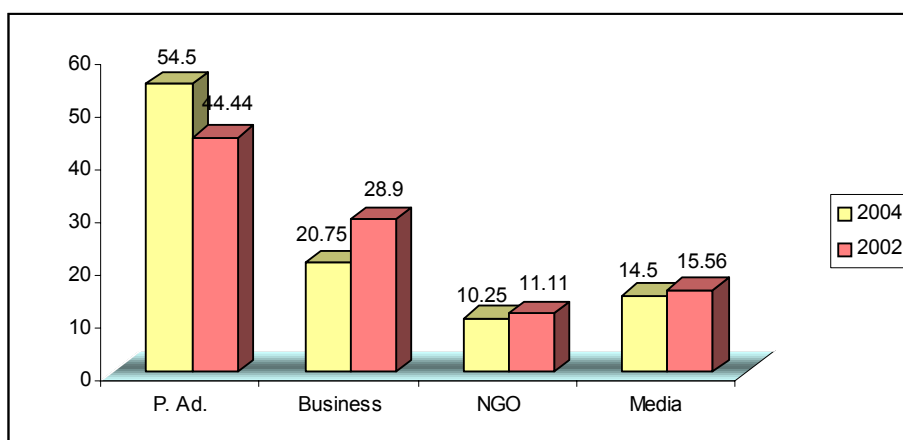


Figure 54. Sample Percentages According to Categories

Sample Description for Each Category

Category \ Percentage	Public Administration	Businesses	Local NGO	Media	Total
Male	42.66	54.22	58.54	41.38	46.5
Female	57.34	45.78	41.46	58.62	53.5
Secondary Education	0.92	6.02			1.75
High School Diploma	0.92	50.60	4.88		11.5

University Diploma	71.56	40.96	58.54	96.55	67.5
Post-Graduate Studies	26.61	2.41	36.59	3.45	19.25
18-22 Years Old	2.29	20.48	14.63	5.17	7.75
23-35 Years Old	49.54	53.01	41.46	86.21	54.75
36-35 Years Old	44.04	20.48	41.46	6.90	33.5
Over 55 Years Old	4.13	6.02	2.44	1.72	4
Respondents	54.5	20.75	10.25	14.5	100

Table 8. Sample Description for Each Category

As Table 8 indicates all categories shared some common characteristics. In all of them most of the respondents were very well educated possessing in most cases a university degree. Also in each of the categories the respondents were relatively young, falling mainly in the 23 – 35 years old age group. As it can be seen from the table the composition of each category is not necessarily representative of the entire population, especially in the case of Businesses. However, the sample composition in each case is in line with our objective to survey a relatively more qualified group in each of the categories.

ANNEX I. QUESTIONNAIRE

ALBANIAN INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (AIIS)

Rr "Deshmoret e 4 Shkurtit", Nr. 7/1. Tirana, Albania

Tel: +355 42 488 53 Fax +355 4 270 337

E-mail aiis@icc.al.eu.org ose aiis@albaniaonline.net

Website: <http://www.aiis-albania.org>

ID: _____

Name of the Interviewer _____

Date of the Interview _____

Questionnaire

Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS) is conducting an opinion in order to assess Albanian perceptions on the European Union and Albania's EU integration. You have been randomly selected for this purpose. Your participation is voluntary, your name and answers will remain anonymous. Even if you begin this interview you can stop at any time you want. The entire conversation will take approximately 10 minutes.

P1. Are you ready to begin?

☐ Yes GO TO THE NEXT SECTION AND BEGIN THE INTERVIEW

☐ No GO TO QUESTION 2

P2. If this is not the right time could I come back at a more convenient time for you?

☐ Yes WRITE DOWN TIME AND PLACE

☐ No GREET AND LEAVE

General Information

Thank you for your time.

Initially I would like to ask some general questions that will help us analyse the data according to social and age group criterion.

1. WRITE DOWN THE GENDER OF THE INTERVIEWEE

1. ☐ MALE

2. ☐ FEMALE

2. Where are you employed? Are you employed in the private business sector, Public Administration, Non Governmental Organization (NGO), in the Media, or elsewhere?

Media	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
Business	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
Non Governmental Organization (NGO)	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Public Administration	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Other, specify _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. What kind of schooling have you completed? Did you graduate from secondary school, high school, university or did you complete postgraduate studies?

Secondary School	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
High School	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
University	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Post Graduate Studies	4 <input type="checkbox"/>

4. What is your age group? Are you 18-22, 23-35, 35-55, or older than 55 years old?

18 – 22 years old	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
23- 35 years old	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
36 – 55 years old	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Over 55 years old	4 <input type="checkbox"/>

General Information on EU

Now I would like to talk with you generally about a number of international organizations.

5. Have you heard of the following organizations?

1	NATO	1 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	2 <input type="checkbox"/> No
2	OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe)	1 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	2 <input type="checkbox"/> No
3	UN (United Nations)	1 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	2 <input type="checkbox"/> No
4	IMF (International Monetary Fund)	1 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	2 <input type="checkbox"/> No
5	World Bank	1 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	2 <input type="checkbox"/> No
6	European Union (EU)	1 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	2 <input type="checkbox"/> No
7	World Trade Organization (WTO)	1 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	2 <input type="checkbox"/> No
8	Council of Europe	1 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	2 <input type="checkbox"/> No

6. Now I will mention a few organizations and I will ask you if Albania has become a member or not. Is Albania member of:

1	NATO	1 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	2 <input type="checkbox"/> No	99 <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW
2	OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe)	1 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	2 <input type="checkbox"/> No	99 <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW

3	UN (United Nations)	₁ <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	₂ <input type="checkbox"/> No	₉₉ <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW
4	European Union (EU)	₁ <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	₂ <input type="checkbox"/> No	₉₉ <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW
5	World Trade Organization (WTO)	₁ <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	₂ <input type="checkbox"/> No	₉₉ <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW
6	Council of Europe	₁ <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	₂ <input type="checkbox"/> No	₉₉ <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW

7. Different people have different opinions regarding the states/organizations with which Albania needs to strengthen its ties. In your opinion how much attention should our government pay to strengthening Albania's ties with the following states/organizations? Please evaluate in a 1 to 10 scale, bearing in mind that the higher the number the more you think our Government should pay attention to strengthening Albania's ties with the given state/organization.

SHOW CARD 1 AND REPEAT QUESTION

1	European Union (EU)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2	NATO	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3	UN (United Nations)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4	Italy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5	Greece	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6	Germany	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
7	France	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8	USA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9	Great Britain	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10	Turkey	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	Macedonia										
12	Serbia and Montenegro										
13	Croatia										
14	Kosovo										
15	Other, specify _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

8. Now I will read some statements about EU and I will ask you to what extent you agree with them. Please evaluate in a 1 to 10 scale, bearing in mind that the higher the number the more you agree with the given statement.

SHOW CARD 2 AND REPEAT QUESTION

1	EU is a democratic organization	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2	EU is a source of peace and security in Europe	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3	EU aids democracy in countries outside EU	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4	EU promotes the economic development of countries outside EU	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5	EU is open to accept any European country	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

9. The European Union was established in order to achieve certain goals. In your opinion how important are the following goals for EU. Please evaluate in a 1 to 10 scale, bearing in mind that the higher the number the more you think the given goal important for EU.

SHOW CARD 3 AND REPEAT QUESTION.

1	The economic development of the member states	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2	Democracy in the member states	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3	EU Enlargement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4	The defense of Europe	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

10. From what you have heard which a\of the following is a EU institution?

1	The European Parliament	₁ <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	₂ <input type="checkbox"/> No	₉₉ <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW
2	World Bank	₁ <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	₂ <input type="checkbox"/> No	₉₉ <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW
3	The European Commission	₁ <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	₂ <input type="checkbox"/> No	₉₉ <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW
4	IMF (International Monetary Fund)	₁ <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	₂ <input type="checkbox"/> No	₉₉ <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW
5	NATO	₁ <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	₂ <input type="checkbox"/> No	₉₉ <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW
6	European Bank of Investments	₁ <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	₂ <input type="checkbox"/> No	₉₉ <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW
7	The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)	₁ <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	₂ <input type="checkbox"/> No	₉₉ <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW
8	Council of Europe	₁ <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	₂ <input type="checkbox"/> No	₉₉ <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW

9	OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe)	₁ <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	₂ <input type="checkbox"/> No	₉₉ <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T KNOW
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EU Integration

Now we will talk for a few minutes about the relations of our country with EU.

11. First of all I would like to ask you whether you have heard about Albania's attempts to become a member of EU?

1. ☐ Yes

2. ☐ No GO TO QUESTION 24

12. Suppose tomorrow there was a referendum on Albania's membership in EU? How would you vote? Would you vote for the membership or against Albania's membership in EU?

1. ☐ For

2. ☐ Against

99. ☐ DON'T KNOW

13. Do you think Albania is ready to become a member of EU?

1. ☐ Yes GO TO QUESTION 15

2. ☐ No

99. ☐ DON'T KNOW

14. Do you think EU should admit Albania even before she is ready to become a member of EU?

1. ☐ Yes

2. ☐ No

99. ☐ DON'T KNOW

15. Albania is trying to become a member of NATO as well as of EU. Which of these organizations will Albania join first? Will it join first NATO or EU?

1. ☐ NATO

2. ☐ EU

99. ☐ DON'T KNOW

16. If Albania is to become a member of EU it has to meet certain criterion. Have you heard of these criteria?

1. ☐ Yes

2. ☐ No

GO TO QUESTION 18

17. Please name some of the criteria you have heard of:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

18. There exist a variety of pinions on the speed with which Albania's integration into EU is taking place. In your opinion how is Albania's integration into EU taking place? Is it taking place fast, slow, very slow or is it not taking place at all?

Fast	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
Slow	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
Very Slow	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Not at all	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
DON'T KNOW	99 <input type="checkbox"/>

19. There also exist different opinions on the time that will be needed for Albania to become a member of EU. How long do you think it will take for Albania to become a member of EU? Will it take 5 years, 10 years, 15 years, more than 15 years or do you think that Albania will never become a member of EU?

5 years	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
10 years	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
15 years	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
More than 15 years	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Albania will never become a member of EU	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
DON'T KNOW	99 <input type="checkbox"/>

20. People have different opinions on the benefits that Albania will derive from EU membership. In your opinion how much will Albania benefit in the following areas? Please evaluate in a 1 to 10 scale, bearing in mind that the greater the number the more you think Albania will benefit in the given area.

SHOW CARD 4 AND REPEAT QUESTION

1	Democratization	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2	Economic Development	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3	Higher Living Standards	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4	Strengthening of the rule of law	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5	Freedom of movement into other EU countries	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6	Other, specify _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

21. Albania's membership into EU depends on a variety of factors. In your opinion how important are the following factors. Please evaluate in a 1 to 10 scale, bearing in mind that the greater the number the more important you think the given factor is for Albania to become a EU member.

SHOW CARD 5 AND REPEAT QUESTION

1	Albanian Politics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2	Albanian Economy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3	The situation in the region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4	EU's stand towards Albania	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5	Albania's religious composition	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6	Corruption	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
7	Organised Crime and Trafficking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8	Lack of Rule of Law	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9	Free and Fair Elections	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10	Other, specify _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

22. In her attempts to become a EU member Albania has to sign a number of agreements with EU. Have you heard of the Stabilization and Association Agreement between EU and Albania?

1. ☐ Yes

2. ☐ No

GO TO QUESTION 24

23. In your opinion, is the signing of the Stabilisation Association Agreement an inevitable step for Albania to become a EU member?

1. ☐ Yes

2. ☐ No

99. ☐ DON'T KNOW

24. Negotiations for the Stabilisation Association Agreement have commenced on 31 January 2003. Different dates have been indicated for the signing of this agreement. In your opinion, the Stabilisation Association Agreement will be signed:

Within 2004	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
-------------	----------------------------

Before 2005 Parliamentary Elections	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
After 2005 Parliamentary Elections	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Within 2006	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
After 2006	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
DON'T KNOW	99 <input type="checkbox"/>

Sources of Information on EU

25. A number of sources offer information on EU. How much information do you receive on EU from the following sources? Please evaluate in a 1 to 10 scale, bearing in mind that the greater the number the more information you receive from the given source. SHOW CARD 6 AND REPEAT QUESTION.

1	Television	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2	Radio	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3	Newspapers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4	Internet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5	EU Delegation to Albania	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6	Conversations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
7	Embassies/International Organizations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8	Think tanks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9	Other, specify _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

26. Are you interested to receive more information on EU?

1. ☐ Yes GO TO QUESTION 26
2. ☐ No END THE INTERVIEW.

Thank you very much for your time. If you are interested we will send you a copy of the conclusions of this survey.

27. How much would you be interested to receive information on EU in the following areas? Please evaluate in a 1 to 10 scale, bearing in mind that the greater the number the more interested you are to receive information in the given area.

SHOW CARD 7 AND REPEAT QUESTION

1	EU economy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2	EU History	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3	EU Institutions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4	Cultural and artistic activities in EU	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5	EU in the international arena	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6	EU enlargement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
7	Other, specify_____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Thank you very much for your time. If you are interested we will send you a copy of the conclusions of this survey.